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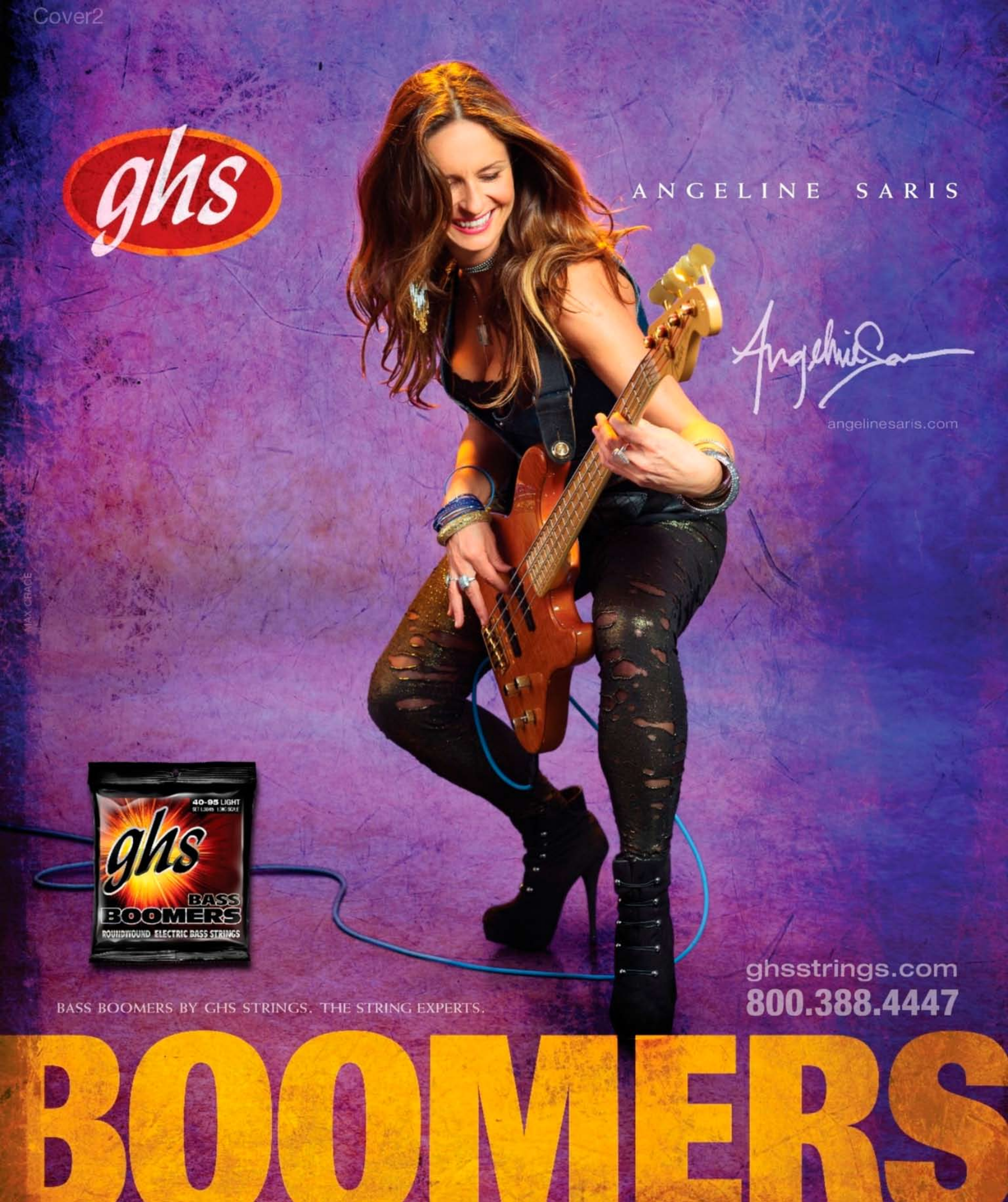
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COMMUNITY

LOWDOWN

BRIAN FOX

Trending Topics

AS WE PUT THIS ISSUE TO BED, WE'RE TUNING OUR GAZE SOUTH TO ANAHEIM, WHICH will once again play host to the slap-and-shred fest that is the NAMM Show. We're beginning to hear bits and pieces about cool upcoming gear releases—and we got some sneak peeks at Bass Player LIVE!—but we're champing at the bit to get down there to press the flesh and pick up on industry trends.

In the last 10 years I've actually been paying attention to this stuff, and there have been a few trends of the type that refuse to be ignored—neodymium speaker cabinets and Class D amplifiers come to mind. In the past two years, digital manipulation of hardware, whether in the case of Ernie Ball's Game Changer pickup switching system or TC Electronic's TonePrint programmable pedals, seems to be a trend that continues to pick up steam. Thinking globally, manufacturers are finding ways to tighten quality control in offshore facilities, bringing costs down while elevating quality. Meanwhile, economists are predicting a boom in domestic manufacturing. What does it all mean? I'm sure I don't know. But you can bet I'll by trying to find out.

In the meantime, dig in and enjoy this issue of BP. Up front, we continue to mine all the gold deposited at this year's Bass Player LIVE!. In the Feature well, we catch up with Andy Fraser and Ben Shepherd, two players that by all our metrics deserve major props for their contributions to two very different branches of the rock & roll family tree. In Soundroom, we take a look at six sweet new stompboxes. In the Woodshed, we've got three killer columns by some of the best bass teachers in the biz. And in Transcription land, Chris Jisi connects with Marcus Miller and Sekou Bunch to get inside "Funkin' For Jamaica (N.Y.)" a tune that'll get your booty shakin' like it's 1980. See you on the other side!

DIG MY RIG

HAVING GONE THROUGH AT LEAST 20 BASSES through the years looking for the ideal combination, I've finally come to a sweet spot in my collection journey. I am completely in love with these beauties. I mainly do session work, write at home, and occasionally go out and slap it around with friends. I purchased all of them new in the year they were made, and built one in 1988.

From left to right: 1985 Steinberger XL2; 2012 Fodera Imperial Purpleheart 5, *EADGC*, tremolo; 2011 F Bass BNF5 fretless; 1988 handmade 4-string I made out of purpleheart and maple; 2012 Fodera Imperial 5, Matt Garrison cut (my favorite); 2011 F Bass BN5; 1992 Carvin LB76 6-string; 2011 Kala SUB U-Bass 5-string. The amps are a Tecamp Puma 350 1x12 combo with a Bergantino 1x12 cabinet, and the effects are TC Electronic Flashback Delay, TC Electronic Corona chorus, Rodenberg gas 702 db booster, Boss RC-3 Loop Station, Boss CS-3 Compression Sustainer, Boss OC-2 Octave Divider. This should do it for a few years. I am just looking for a vintage Jazz Bass, and then I can rest in peace. Either that or I will turn myself in to BCA (Bass Collector's Anonymous).
—JOSEPH MCCLENDON III

THE BUZZ

Detroit Bass Fest 2012

November 17th, 2012 marked the third installment of the Detroit Bass Fest, Motown's salute to our favorite low end instrument and its masters. Some of the Midwest's finest bass slingers converged on Bert's Warehouse Theatre in Detroit's historic Eastern Marketplace to put their chops on display and celebrate their instrument.

Kalamazoo's **Bill Clements** kicked off the show with a drums-and-organ power trio that ripped through a set of fiery improvised fusion. The crowd was wowed by his technical mastery, and even more amazed that he does it all with one arm. [Clements lost his lower right arm in an industrial accident in 1989.]

Chicago native **Jauqo III-X** then delivered a sizzling jazz-rock set with his guitar-and-drum power trio. Jauqo touched on some of his unique methods, including an explanation of his "slap and pick" technique that incorporates a pickstyle finger attack in place of a pop. Jauqo was also accompanied by Ben Leck of Xotic Guitars, who co-sponsored the Fest and brought more than a dozen instruments and effects for festivalgoers to sample.

Bass powerhouse **Doug Johns** was up next, and covered the gambit of eye-popping and jaw-dropping bass playing that included chording, slapping, tapping, and looping. The Cleveland native, who released his latest album, *Blomp!*, at the Fest, was accompanied by drummer Jay Simmons and concluded his set with a medley of Led Zeppelin tunes, all arranged for bass.

The night wrapped up with Detroit native son **Nate Watts**, longtime bass player and musical director for Stevie Wonder. Admitting, "I don't usually do clinics like this," Watts opted to jam on such Stevie classics as "I Wish," "Sir Duke," "As," and "Do I Do," as the crowd clapped and sang along. Joined by Mahavishnu Orchestra alums Jean-Luc Ponty on violin and **Ralphe Armstrong** on electric upright bass, Watts delighted the crowd with his renditions and stopped to answer questions about his career with Wonder along the way. Both Watts and Armstrong took a moment to remember former bass cohort and Motown session bassist Bob Babbitt and Detroit jazz bassist Don Mayberry, who both passed away in 2012. Mayberry was posthumously presented with the Detroit Bass Fest Guardian Award.

"All the players were just fantastic this year," said Bass Fest president Les Collie, Jr. "We were very happy we could once again bring all these folks together to celebrate our under-appreciated instrument and put it center stage for a change". Currently in talks with several potential corporate sponsors, Collie hopes to make next year's Detroit Bass Fest an even bigger and better celebration of the bass. —RYAN GHEDOTTE

Doug Johns, Nate Watts, Bill Clements, and Jauqo III-X (l–r) at Detroit Bass Fest 2012

K. FOX

COURT OF OPINION

What's the best upgrade/modification you've done to your bass or basses?

Nordstrand Big Splits, a Nordy 3-band preamp, Babicz FCH bridge, and Hipshot Ultralight tuners.
—Mick Donner

Babicz bridge, EMG HZ J pickups, and an AllParts neck on one of my Jazz Basses.
—Jon Harris

Took my '61 Jazz Bass, sanded off the finish, cut in a Badass I bridge, added a brass nut and a Gibson humbucker between the two pickups, and got rid of the stack pots. Then I slimmed the neck a bit and made it fretless. Other than that, it's stock. I really like the Pennzoil sticker I just put on it. **—Ed Friedland**

Installing a "producer's switch" that does absolutely nothing. It's always a great laugh during a session.
—Brian Duke Song

I replaced the tone pot with a Stellartone ToneStyler. All my passive basses have this mod.
—Chuck Ward

Straplocks + Badass II bridge + Audere preamp = an amazing-sounding Deluxe Jazz Bass.
—Smackie Bass

Duct tape over the pickups.
—Matthew Bradford

Moses Graphite neck.
—John Richard Voegele Jr

Aguilar '70s pickups and OBP-2 preamp.
—Tai Jun Kim

Leo Quan Badass bridge, Hipshot D-Tuner, and Seymour Duncan Antiquity pickups on a Fender '62 Jazz Bass Reissue.
—Steve Gamble

Active EMGs on my '65 Jazz Bass. No more buzz, and awesome, beefy tone. Prior to that, in country/western bars with poor wiring, I would have to stand to avoid the buzz from fluorescent lights. **—Jim Tedeschi**

Audere preamp with Nordstrand Fat Stack pickups—a winning combo! **—Ed Shaw**

THE REAL WORLD

Michael G. Hoelen II

Home base Merritt Island, Florida; Kaiserslautern, Germany
Occupation Supply Technician/Musician
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Heroes & inspiration Bootsy Collins, Mark King, Billy Cox, Marcus Miller, Victor Wooten, T.M. Stevens, Louis Johnson, Larry Graham, Darryl Jones, Andrew "The Bullet" Lauer, Geddy Lee, the list goes on.
Contact michaelhoelen@yahoo.com, michael.hoelen@us.army.mil

How did you come to play bass?

I started playing when I was 14. After hearing Red Hot Chili Peppers, Level 42, Parliament-Funkadelic, and many others, I was hooked. Once I picked up the bass, I never looked back!

What's a lesson you've learned along the way?

Be true to yourself. Technique is great, but it's not everything. Play for the song and the groove. Sometimes less is more. Be tight with your drummer as a friend *and* with the music.

What are your musical goals?

To continue recording/gigging with friends. Start recording my own music. I'd also like to start touring with artists, if possible. Most importantly have fun while making music.

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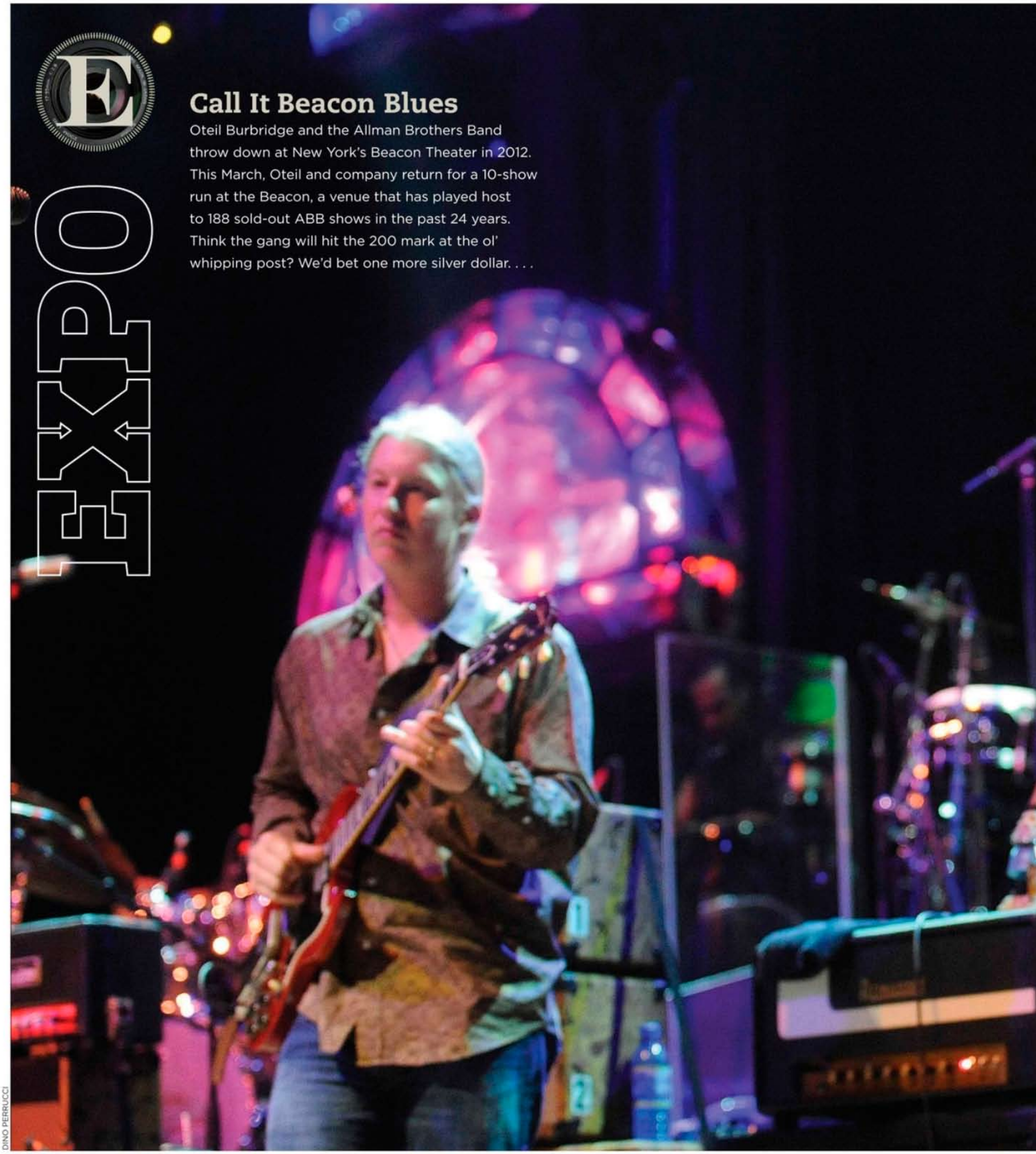


Call It Beacon Blues

Oteil Burbridge and the Allman Brothers Band throw down at New York's Beacon Theater in 2012. This March, Oteil and company return for a 10-show run at the Beacon, a venue that has played host to 188 sold-out ABB shows in the past 24 years. Think the gang will hit the 200 mark at the ol' whipping post? We'd bet one more silver dollar. . . .

DINO PERRUCCI

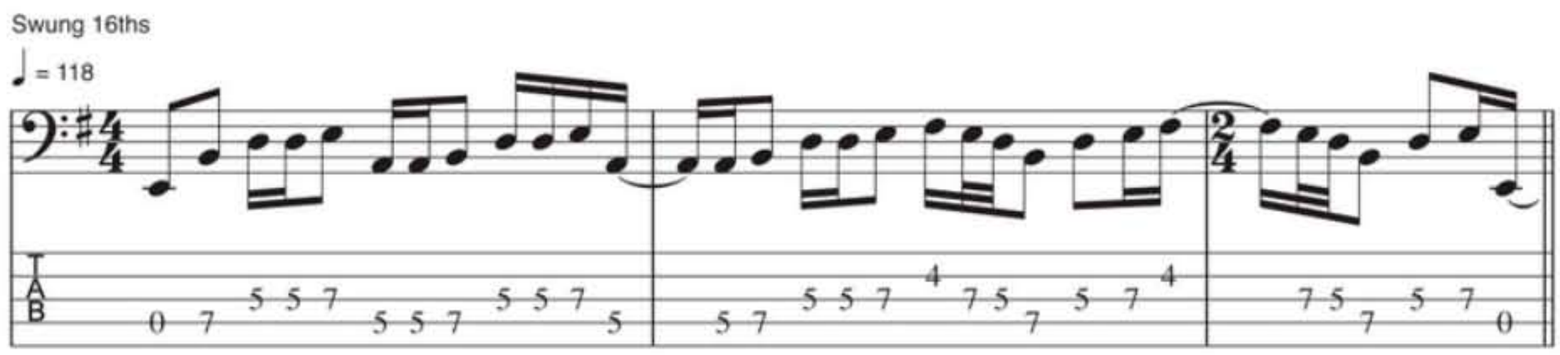
BASS NOTES

Jerry Watts with the John Daversa Progressive Big Band

BY CHRIS JISI

CALL IT A FIRST IN FIVE YEARS OF BASS PLAYER LIVE! clinics in Los Angeles: cramming the 18-piece John Daversa Progressive Big Band on the stage of Room B for an hour-plus of cutting-edge chamber jazz from the bassist's perspective. The idea sprung from Jerry Watts, head of the bass department at the Los Angeles Music Academy (LAMA) and nimble anchor of trumpeter/composer Daversa's forward-leaning flock. After the ensemble opened with "The Bridge" and "Your Mother," from their new CD, *Junk Wagon* (see January '13), Watts took to the mic to talk about the personal impact of seeing the big bands of Thad Jones & Mel Lewis, Jaco Pastorius, and Maynard Ferguson (with Will Lee as a last-second sub). He also provided a history of the five-year-old Daversa unit and spoke about LAMA, the clinic's sponsor, before fielding questions. Asked how much of the music is notated for bass, Watts replied, "most of it," but stressed the importance of being loose in addition to reading what's on the page: "John encourages us to stretch and find new ways to interpret the music." A question about whether he can hang back in the pocket during groove sections resulted

EX. 1



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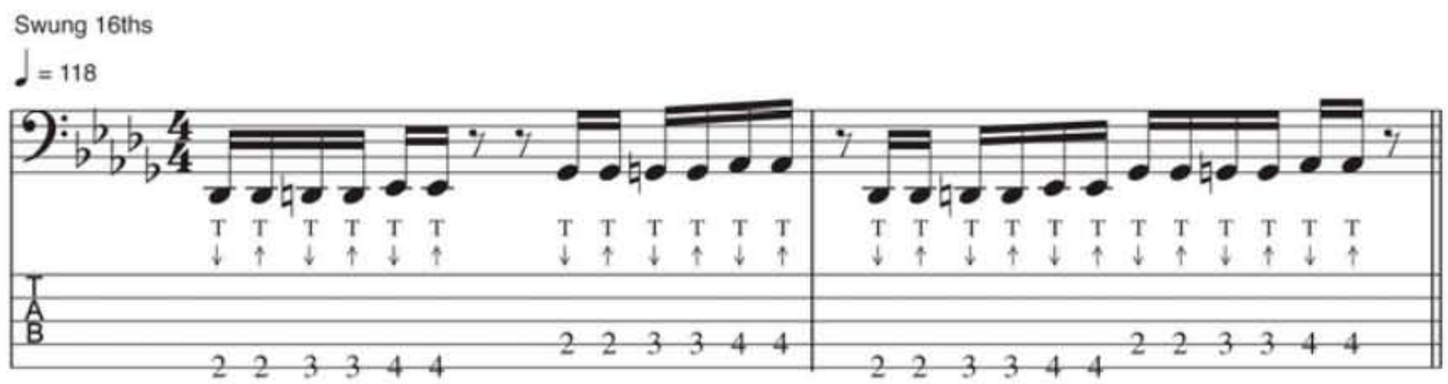

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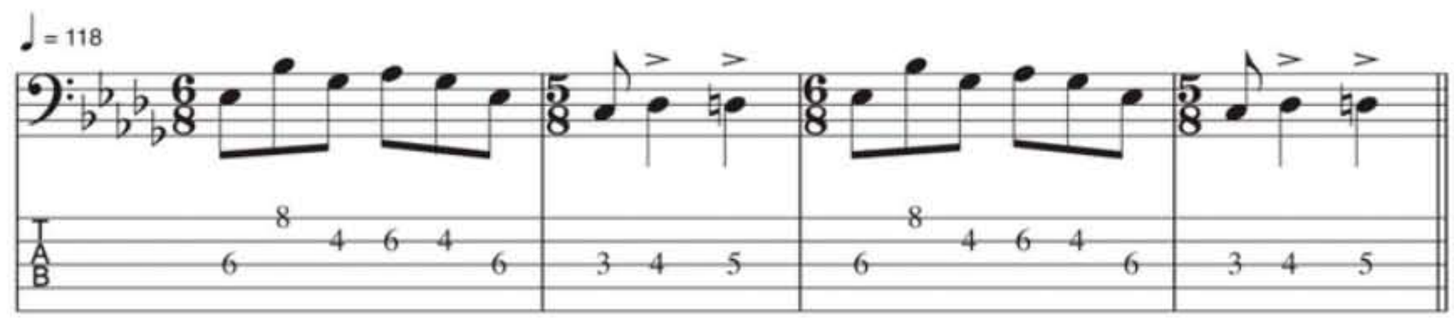

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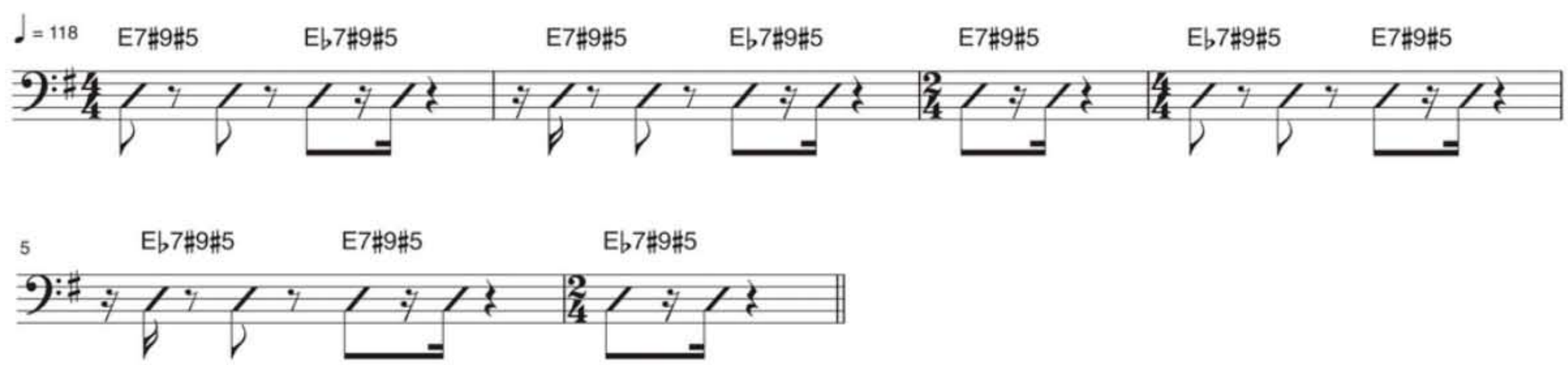

in an emphatic *yes!* from the trumpet section, and all-around laughter. Queried on whether he listens to the horns when playing unison lines with them, Watts noted that he absolutely does. The band then played "Cheeks," and concluded the clinic with a performance of the CD's title track.

Afterward, Watts gave BP a closer look at his chart for "The Bridge," along with some insight. **Example 1** shows the basic groove of the opening section, which Watts recorded on his MTD 535. "When the tune starts, Jeff Driscoll's piccolo plays the bass figure for several bars. I had to pay close attention to *how* Jeff was phrasing the notes—particularly the 32nd-notes [in bars 2 and 3]—because the line definitely has some swing to it. The trick is to articulate all the notes along with the piccolo and keep it light, retaining the bounce and forward momentum that [drummer] Gene Coye set up so nicely—we're definitely not laying back in this section! In my left hand, playing the part across three strings instead of two allowed for better phrasing of the 32nd-notes. I plucked fingerstyle."

Example 2 contains the repeated two-bar groove in the piece's next section. "At this point, the whole band *sits*, and the swing straightens out a bit as we play the 16th groove," Watts offers. "Here, I'm in unison with several instruments, most notably the low brass. Originally I tried fingerstyle, but after hearing the playback, it seemed the plucks tended to obscure the attack and envelope of the trombone notes. So I ended up playing the passage using double-thumbing [up and down thumbstrokes], which allowed the bass to cut through without stepping on any toes." After the opening groove returns, the composition moves to a section with alternating 6/8 and 5/8 measures, a typical portion of which is shown in **Ex. 3**. Advises Watts, "It was important to be right with the woodwind and brass phrasing. It took me a minute to hear their feel. Once that locked in, the whole thing dropped in the pocket."

Finally, **Ex. 4** contains the repeated six-bar phrase of the solo and rap sections, for which Watts is given just the rhythm and the changes. "John has always advocated and expected Gene and me to freely explore and improvise in open sections like this. I played the whole thing using double-thumbing, with some right-forearm muting to add a bit more percussive kick, and I stick to playing the root and ♭7 for most of it. At this point, the bass holds the fort, and the drums interact more with the soloist. My goal is to keep the energy high and build in intensity." **BP**

John Taylor's Pleasure Groove

BY BRIAN FOX

"THE LAST TIME I WAS ON THIS STAGE IN THIS ROOM, I was helping out my stepson, Travis," says John Taylor, settling in for his Bass Player LIVE! clinic at S.I.R. Los Angeles. "He had formed a band with his peers at Brentwood High School, and they didn't have a bass player, so I sat in. I had a good time playing with them, but one afternoon the singer turned to Travis and said, 'You know, if John wanted to play with us live, we could just put him behind a screen. . . .' That was my last rehearsal with them."

For the next hour, Taylor spoke with Tom Sykes, who worked with the Duran Duran bassist on his new memoir, *In the Pleasure Groove: Love, Death, and Duran Duran*. The following is a book excerpt John read to the gathered assembly of bass geeks and Duran freaks, detailing his band's early days. You can watch the clinic in its entirety at bassplayer.com/video.

"Our commitment to [Duran Duran managers] Paul, Michael, and the Rum Runner [music venue] brought us a degree of profitability that we had never really experienced. Paul and Michael bought some gear for us. I needed to step up from the cheap Hondo bass I was using and the cumbersome amplifier combo I was schlepping around with me. I replaced that with a slick Peavey amp head and matching speaker cabinet. For my next bass, I was looking for something I could call my own—something with style.

"Another example of how the rules [of rock & roll] were changing at the beginning of the '80s was in musical instrument manufacturing. Fender and Gibson had the monopoly on '70s music—everyone played one or the other, and most bassists used Fender Precisions. I didn't want to be part of any tradition. Was that the times, or the teens? As I've gotten older, tradition—and being part of a continuum of writers and performers—has become more important to me. But in 1980, I wanted to stand apart from what had come before as much as I could.

"There was a wave of manufacturers coming out of Japan producing instruments that were strong and stylish, and the common knowledge was that they made the grade. The same thing would happen with cars ten years later. I liked the Ibanez basses that Sting used, but they were expensive. At Jones & Crossland [musical instrument store in Birmingham], I saw and tried out a bass I liked the look of by a Japanese manufacturer I had not heard of before—Aria. It had a similar look to the Ibanez, and there were two models on offer: the 1200, which had two pickups and active electronics that required 6-volt batteries to power it, and the 600, with a single pickup, and no active electronics. It was sleek, and very pretty, with a two-tone wood grain. It was also half the price. Maybe the Barrows [Paul and Michael] were footing the bill, but I had no intention of taking advantage of them. It was a good choice—the Aria would become my signature instrument, and would get me around the world.

"I've never had the kind of relationship with my basses one often hears guitar players talk about having with their 6-string lovers. I don't cook breakfast with my bass strapped on, and I've been known to take it to bed with me only once or twice in desperate times. I never became a real tech head, and I'm still using Peavey amplifiers.

"Every night at the Rum Runner, we were being exposed to the best in contemporary music—European dance music, funk, disco, and jazz-funk, all accompanied by a steady stream of vintage wine, champagne, a little smoke now and again, and even a little toot.

"The next few months, the band was auditioning for singers and guitarists. They would come to us from all over the Midlands, some from farther afield, having answered ads that we had taken out in the music press. We would tell the guitar players that the singer was sick, and we would tell the same story to the singers about the guitar player. And all the time, Roger [Taylor], Nick [Rhodes] and I would be refining the backbone style that would become the sound of Duran Duran." **BP**

INFO

CONNECT

Pick up a copy of John Taylor's new book, *In the Pleasure Groove: Love, Death, and Duran Duran* [Penguin, 2012], and watch John's clinic at Bass Player LIVE!. **bassplayer.com/march2012**

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BP RECOMMENDS

PETER GABRIEL

SO: THE DEFINITIVE AUTHORIZED STORY OF THE ALBUM (DVD) [Eagle Vision]

Eagle Rock's excellent 94-minute DVD marking the 30th Anniversary of *So* is packed with first-hand insight and revelatory reflection on Peter Gabriel's truly timeless recording. Among those opening up are Gabriel and producer Daniel Lanois—each behind boards soloing various tracks from the songs; engineer Kevin Killen, who did yeoman's work synching and editing this early massive meeting of man and machines; and a half-dozen musicians who played on the platter. Of course, a key part of the legend of the album is the singular bass work by **Tony Levin** and **Larry Klein**, and both are interviewed.

Levin relates how "Sledgehammer" was done last-minute, and picks up the black Music Man fretless he used—played with a pick through an octave pedal—to demonstrate the bass line (with close-ups on both hands). For "Don't Give Up," Tony talks about Gabriel asking him to put notes to the rhythm box tom-tom figure that was the tune's genesis. Grabbing the Music Man he used (since partially burned in a fire), he shows how he got the bass line first and then added the double-stop harmony. He also recounts shoving diapers (that he had on hand for his daughter) under the strings to get what Gabriel and Lanois famously dubbed the "Super Wonder Nappy Bass Sound" for the song's outro. Later, Levin tells the studio and live stories of developing and using "drumfingers" on "Big Time," which he gamely dons to play the part on his burned Music Man.

Klein relives being called by Gabriel to work on "Mercy Street," before demonstrating his dual fretted and fretless parts on a 5-string Music Man. "In Your Eyes"—for which both Klein and Levin are credited—is covered with no specific mention of the bass, though we do learn the album track is culled from 96 versions! Klein also talks up the 1986 Amnesty tour with Gabriel, accompanied by a concert clip of him playing Levin's "Red Rain" part. [Note: Darryl Jones can be seen in brief footage of Gabriel's 1988 Amnesty tour, as well.] *Rolling Stone*'s David Fricke sums it all up by describing a classic album as "The best album you can make at that moment, with the notion you want it to live longer than you do." That ethic certainly extended to *So*'s unforgettable bassmanship. —CHRIS JISI

MARK EGAN, KARL LATHAM, JOHN HART

UNIT 1

[Wavetone Records]

Fretless master **Mark Egan**'s über-versatile trio (with guitarist John Hart and drummer Karl Latham) reimagines bebop classics live with an East Coast edge. Applying straight-16th grooves to the normally swung "Epistrophy," "Bemsha Swing," and "Mr. Clean" (also just covered by Marcus Miller) creates a fresh canvas for mind-locked interplay and Hart's heavy blowing. Elsewhere, the standard "Old Folks" becomes a modal Afro-bossa with a killer outro, while the doubletime treatment of "Footprints" boasts Egan's finest solo turn. —CHRIS JISI

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From left: Gwizdala, Alderete, and Erskine

Marketing In The Social Media Age

With Janek Gwizdala, Juan Alderete & Damian Erskine

BY BRIAN FOX

"IT'S AWESOME TO BE SITTING HERE AND TO NOT HAVE a bass in my hand," says Janek Gwizdala to kick off a roundtable discussion with bass bro's Juan Alderete and Damian Erskine. A jam with the three playing monsters would easily earn a top spot on the Bass Player LIVE! highlight reel, but the guys haven't come together to trade riffs. No matter how much time Janek, Juan, or Damian spends with his instrument, each recognizes the importance of building and maintaining a social media presence. Here are a few of the insights they shared. Join the full discussion at bassplayer.com/video.

JUST DO IT

Gwizdala There's an important lesson to be learned from Derek Sivers, the founder of CD Baby. He didn't know what he was doing when he started; he was making something like $15 a month. He sold his company a few years later for $22 million. The lesson is this: just start. You won't have any feedback until you do, and it's that feedback from fans and followers that you need.

Erskine That lesson holds true for all aspects of your career. For years, I didn't play in bands because I didn't think I was good enough, and I didn't make YouTube videos because I didn't think I had anything worth recording. There's no way to do it except to do it.

Alderete When I was 'shedding, none of this technology existed. But it's become another part of the music business. The way I see it, the game just got bigger.

"I'D RATHER BE PRACTICING. . . ."

Gwizdala What is the point of practicing if you can't communicate to people what it is you're doing? You could be good at shredding in your bedroom, but then what are you going to be good at? Shredding in your bedroom. Unless you integrate some of this stuff, it's kind of pointless.

Erskine There's no reason you can't do both. I used to turn a lot of my students on to Janek's video podcasts, telling them that he basically practices on camera, so you get to see the process.

Gwizdala That podcast was the catalyst for all my online stuff. It was 30 minutes of audio, recorded with the internal microphone of my laptop—it was ghetto! But I'd later be doing clinics at universities on the strength of that, because teachers at the school were using it as curriculum. I played, I talked about what I was doing, and like a radio show would, I introduced people to other music I was listening to. It engaged people and encouraged people to follow it.

KNOW YOURSELF, KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Gwizdala One thing I love about Juan and Damian is that they're both very honest people, and their [online] content is honest. That speaks louder than anything.

Erskine You really have to care about what you are doing, and be passionate about what you put out there. With social media, you need to interact with people. I'm a warts-and-all guy—I'll put up video where I'm not playing all that well. But if you're into me and my musical journey, you can take it all.

Social media levels the playing field. You don't need much of anything to get out there and do it. Part of getting into it was a process of self-discovery for me—I wanted to know who I was.

Alderete With any website you go to, it's the content that gets people excited. When I'm creating stuff for pedalsandeffects.com, I don't really know what it is that people will get out of it. I just know that if it gets me excited, there's got to be at least a base of people like me.

1,000 TRUE FANS

Gwizdala There's [Kevin Kelly's] concept of "1,000 True Fans," which basically says that if you have a thousand true fans, and you can convince them to part with $100 every year, you'll have a six-figure income. If you put out a record once a year, make a t-shirt, put on a couple of concerts, and maybe put out some instructional stuff, it's not hard to get $100 out of a true fan. Gone are the days when you need to sell a million records to see a $50 return after you've recouped your advance. It's not as difficult as it seems. **BP**

INFO

CONNECT

- Connect with Janek Gwizdala. **janekgwizdala.com**
- Connect with Juan Alderete. **pedalsandeffects.com**
- Connect with Damian Erskine. **damianerskine.com**
- Desktop, laptop, or mobile, watch this discussion in its entirety on whichever gadget you please. **bassplayer.com/march2013**

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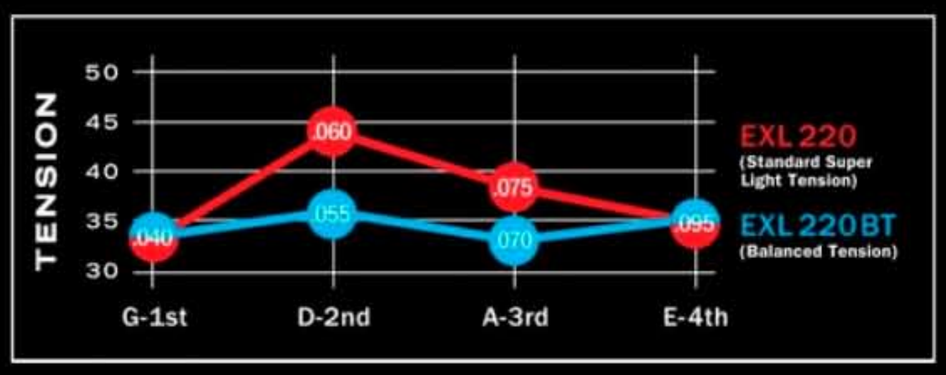

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List $45–$70

Contact planetwaves.com

FENDER
Select Active Jazz Bass

Fender's new Select Active Jazz Bass starts with the core of its passive counterpart released last year—an alder body, flame maple top, quartersawn neck, and hand-stained finish—and bumps up the onboard control with an active/passive mini-toggle switch, master volume control, pickup blend knob, and three bands of active EQ.

List $3,200

Contact fender.com

PORT CITY AMPLIFICATION
Orleans Bass Preamp

The Port City Orleans is a hand-wired tube bass preamp that features three bands of EQ, a volume control, and a THICK switch that provides a boost in the low end. Built in North Carolina, the Orleans is housed in an aluminum chassis and features JJ preamp tubes, Mojo Dijon capacitors, carbon film resistors, custom American-made transformers, PVC coated copper wire, and Switchcraft jacks.

List $1,300

Contact portcityamps.com

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With input from PRS peers Wyzard [Mother's Finest] and Kevin Walker [Justin Timberlake], Gary Granger tweaked some particulars of his signature Private Stock bass to create the Core series Granger 4 and Granger 5 basses. The basses come standard with a mahogany body, figured maple top, maple neck, and rosewood fingerboard, with the option of flame or quilt maple tops, mahogany or rosewood necks, and maple or ebony fingerboards.

List N/A

Contact prsguitars.com

VEILLETTE GUITARS

Flyer Bass

Veillette's Flyer Bass utilizes a braced, radiused Sitka spruce top aimed to improve both comfort and stability, and rigid maple sides and back for increased attack and definition. An 18-volt active piezo pickup system lends the bass its electric voice.

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Contact veilletteguitars.com

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Street $250

Contact darkglasselectronics.com

ROARIN REDEM

BEN SHEPHERD'S WILD RIDE BACK WITH SOUNDGARDEN

BY JIMMY LESLIE

PHOTOGRAPH BY ELIZABETH RAAB

AFTER a 13-year hiatus from touring, Soundgarden has essentially picked up right where it left off. The fact that the Seattle Sound pioneers' first full-length recording in 16 years fits seamlessly into their fabled catalogue is a testament to the Circle of Power among frontman Chris Cornell, guitarist Kim Thayil, drummer Matt Cameron, and ever-ornery, multi-talented, yet ultimately humble bassist, Ben Shepherd. "I'm a total hack," says Shepherd earnestly. "But I was one of the first Soundgarden fans, and I always said that I would do anything to get the songs across."

In the wake of original bassist Hiro Yamamoto's departure following the release of the band's 1990 major label debut, *Louder Than Love*, Shepherd converted from guitar to bass specifically for Soundgarden. (Jason Everman held the bass chair briefly.) Shepherd's de-tuned, thunderous tone and askew songcraft factored immensely as the band refined its grungy sound throughout the decade on *Badmotorfinger*, *Superunknown*, and *Down on the Upside*. When the dust settled in 1997, Soundgarden called it quits and never looked back. Shepherd and Cameron kept working together, as their Hater side project with Monster Magnet's John McBain (formed in 1993 with Shepherd on guitar) evolved into Wellwater Conspiracy (with Shepherd originally singing lead), but he doesn't reflect fondly. "I didn't even like doing that stuff, especially the shows," he quips. "I never felt comfortable. Wellwater was more

NG
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fun because I could just have the microphone and not have to play stupid parts. But those Hater songs were built around being played exactly the same every time. I'm way more of an improv person. If you're going for a technically accurate reproduction of the repertoire, you might as well be a gymnast."

Shepherd was off music altogether by 2008, completely disenfranchised after being robbed of all his gear just as he was about to mix his first solo album. He eventually got back to work on another, but just as he was finishing it, he got the call he'd been waiting on for what must have felt like forever: Soundgarden was back in business.

It's been a music-business eternity since BP checked in with Shepherd for a March 1993 feature on alternative-rock players. He appeared on the cover, but that doesn't mean he was happy about it. "I was bummed out because Ray Brown was also in that issue, and I felt he deserved the cover," explains Shepherd over the phone from his longtime home turf on Bainbridge Island across the Puget Sound from Seattle. His attitude reflects the atmosphere of his environment—mostly gloomy, with patches of Black Hole Sun.

What comes to mind thinking back on how you approached filling Hiro Yamamoto's shoes?

I was lucky to be learning Hiro's parts, because usually bass players are relegated to a role of following along, which I can't stand. Who wants to be an offensive tackle? So at least it was Hiro, but he was always mixed so damn quietly on the recordings that I could never hear him well enough to develop a deep understanding of his fluidity or his textures. There are songs like "Entering" that I really want to do and can't figure out for the life of me.

Most bass players have the bass player mentality. It's actually refreshing to hear yours.

What the hell is the bass player mentality?

Plenty of bassists feel just fine about being an "offensive tackle."

That's not what it's about. To me, it's about getting the song across. Playing bass rather than guitar doesn't really mean anything.

There's an adage that guitar players make lousy bass players, but you wound up doing well. What was your initial conversion to bass like?

I played pretty well immediately, because of Hiro's influence and some other real bass players I knew growing up. You have to decide right away how you're going to learn. Playing with a pick can throw you into the realm of being a guitar player on bass. But that's not really what it's about; it's about tone and texture. I thought of my favorite bass players—including Hiro, Chuck Dukowski from Black Flag, and Mike Watt—and most of what I liked was fingerstyle. I decided I'd better learn to play that way. I started listening to Charles Mingus because I wanted to learn how to play some dirty, weird shit.

What Mingus stuff did you pick up?

All of it, mostly during the making of *Badmotorfinger*. I had only been on bass in the band for nine months. Sometimes I would go for a note and miss it entirely, either on the fingerboard or with my plucking hand because the string spacing was so different from playing guitar. I'd hit the gap. Rookie mistake!

What's the history of your classic Soundgarden bass, the '72 Fender Jazz?

It belonged to the Wood brothers. [*Andrew Wood fronted seminal Seattle-scene bands Malfunkshun and Mother Love Bone.*] I bought it to try out for Soundgarden, and I played it on every Soundgarden record and every tour. I called it "Tree"

INFO

LISTEN

Soundgarden, *King Animal* [Republic, 2012]

EQUIP

Basses Fender '50s Precision Bass, Fender Vintage '62 Precision Bass, Fender American Standard Jazz Bass, Rickenbacker 4001, Squier Vintage Modified Precision Bass TB, Eastwood Airline Map Bass
Strings GHS Bass Boomers H3045 Heavy (.050, .070, .095, .115) or ML3045 Medium Light (.045, .065, .080, .100)
Rig Ampeg SVT-VR, Ampeg SVT-610HLF 6x10 cabinet, Ampeg SVT-810E 8x10 cabinet, Mesa Engineering Carbine M6, Mesa Engineering Standard PowerHouse 1200 1x15 + 4x10 cabinet, Ampeg B-15 (studio)
Effects Mesa Engineering V-Twin, Dunlop CryBaby 105Q Bass Wah, Boss TU-3 tuner, Roland AD-50 Double Beat fuzz/wah

CONNECT

Watch clips from Soundgarden's Live on Letterman concert. **bassplayer.com/march2013**

Ben Shepherd (left) and Chris Cornell in the studio

because it was so heavy. At that time it felt like it weighed more than I did because I was scrawny as hell.

Then my bass tech said, "Man, you're too tall. This bass looks tiny on you." I lowered the strap so it would look cooler, and I wanted to straighten out my arms so I could just use my fingers. The ergonomic advantage is you don't get tennis elbow or sore wrists or anything else because you're not doing anything your body wasn't designed to do. That's why I always wore it long, and I'm tall enough to get away with it looking exaggeratedly long. I can still touch all the strings where I want. You have to contour your body, and be willing to throw your whole body into it. Always spread your legs to get closer to the neck.

I suppose "Tree" vanished in the robbery?

Yeah. They took everything. I slipped into a

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comatose state and went to work as a carpenter's grunt. After a two-year, anti-music funk I decided to start playing again. My friends cajoled me into making a new record. I told everyone that we could do whatever we wanted because no one would hear it anyway. But then Matt Chamberlain and Greg Gilmore started showing up out of the blue, volunteering their ace drumming. Once those guys started laying down drum tracks, I started thinking, "Oh man—now it's real. I have to up the ante."

When are we going to hear that solo record?

The music is mastered and sequenced. The title right now is *In Deep Owl*. That's an old nickname for the neighborhood where I hang out. I'm hung up on what I want on the album cover; I'm looking at things today. Otherwise, it's just sitting there waiting for me to find a way to get it out to fans. It was done before Soundgarden returned to doing anything, and then it was put on the back burner.

"IF YOU'RE GOING FOR A TECHNICALLY ACCURATE REPRODUCTION OF THE REPERTOIRE, YOU MIGHT AS WELL BE A GYMNAST."

What are your thoughts on the reunion?

I don't think we should have split up in the first place. We definitely needed a hiatus, and we took one. It was just longer than everyone thought. I can see all the proactive goodness of it. It's ironic that two days before the call, I was finishing my solo album and telling everyone I would never be in another band—ever. I will help other guys make records. I've been a hired gun to my friend Mark Lanegan [Screaming Trees, Queens Of The Stone Age]; it's fun to be a part of a creative process and play live, but for me nothing compares to Soundgarden taking the stage. That's the big daddy of them all. I knew we'd always be in business together, so we might as well do the cool part—make music.

It's well documented that you originally regrouped to work out business matters, but that quickly developed into playing. How did that go down from your perspective?

It was natural. I had been waiting for those guys, and then all of the sudden there we were working at Pearl Jam's warehouse. I was bummed that it wasn't just the four of us at some friend's house, but we were lucky it turned out that way because Kim's guitar tech, Josh Evans, started recording us from the second we all put on our instruments and started jamming.

What instrument did you put on?

When I started playing again I bought a stock Fender Precision Bass right off the rack, and that's the one I use. [*According to tech Nathan Yaccino, it's tuned DADG most of the time.*] It sounds and plays completely different from my old Jazz Bass.

Why did you make the switch from Jazz to P?

Jazzes are too little for me. And when you hit a note and pluck through the string toward your hip, it disappears, kind of like a raindrop hitting cement instead of deep water. I like immediate response and heaviness. That P-Bass grabs the note immediately and reflects it back the other way.

How did you set up to record *King Animal*?

All of our techs were in the studio working with us. We ran Ampeg SVT and Mesa Boogie heads through a couple of cabinets, along with an Ampeg flip-top [B-15] all at the same time in the bass room. They were all miked up sitting in a row right next to each other. It seemed ridiculous to me, because there wasn't much difference in the sound. I didn't really mess with textures.

It looks like the Starship Enterprise when you're looking out into the main room of Studio X with all the guitar stuff on the exact opposite side of the room. I'd go out to hit it in the big live room wearing headphones and maybe crack open the sliding glass door to the bass room a bit to feel the vibe. It felt cool as hell to be in that situation again—like traveling through time.

So all four of you played together?

Exactly. We usually get the drums down with all four of us pounding it out. We'll choose a take, and then I'll sit there and track bass to that. *Down on the Upside* was an exception; we used almost all the first takes. But for *King Animal* we tracked drums, then bass, etc. With Pro Tools you don't have to do anything right the first time, but it's still more fun to push yourself to actually mean it, do it right, and nail it in one take. I was done pretty quickly, and I didn't add any extra overdubs.

How did your songwriting contributions flow?

I felt kind of out of the loop because I was so personally unorganized at the time—my whole life was stupid. I spent a lot of time commuting and fighting with my girlfriend, so I utilized the rehearsal time and pre-production jams to work on things. I didn't talk much; I was busy trying to come up with bass stuff that I could remember well enough to focus on when I got home to my guitar and my recorder.

Do you generally show your song ideas to the band on guitar?

Yes, because it makes more sense to them. They're all guitar players. I've written a few songs on bass in the past, including "Switch Opens." But that's rare because you don't want to write a whole wandering bass line wondering what the drum beat and the guitar chords are going to be. I usually talk in sentences on bass. That's where "Rowing" came from—the last song on *King Animal*.

That's an interesting slow churn, with your distorted bass line of hammered-on trills way up on the neck driving the song along.

That's a really long bass sentence. It has nothing to do with how the song turned out. I was recording some ideas while they were talking, and Chris snagged it after hearing that line. He showed the initiative to actually turn that into the song. That's pretty rare.

You have several co-writing credits for your musical contributions.

Right. I wrote "Taree" shortly after Soundgarden broke up. I started playing a bluesy lick in drop *D* on my Gretsch Country Gentleman, and it reminded me of old photos of my brother and his friend skateboarding in our old neighborhood, Taree. It was a summer cruising kind of feeling. I wanted the choruses to lift up, but the slow part with the feedback—that's more the mood I wanted for the whole song.

How did the "Non-State Actor" riff come about?

I wanted to bring in something that rocked. I thought it would be more like Hendrix's "Ezy Rider," but Matt came up with a completely different drumbeat than I imagined. It got over-arranged, but then Chris and Kim saved it with what they wrote.

What can you share about the first single, "Been Away Too Long"?

I wanted to throw a vast apocalyptic melody in there. There's a totally different version of that song where I play a vicious bass line that makes the song move completely differently. It got kyboshed immediately by everybody else. The working title was "EBE" because of the tuning, which is actually *EEBB*.

Did you tune that way to match the guitar part, or did you write it that way?

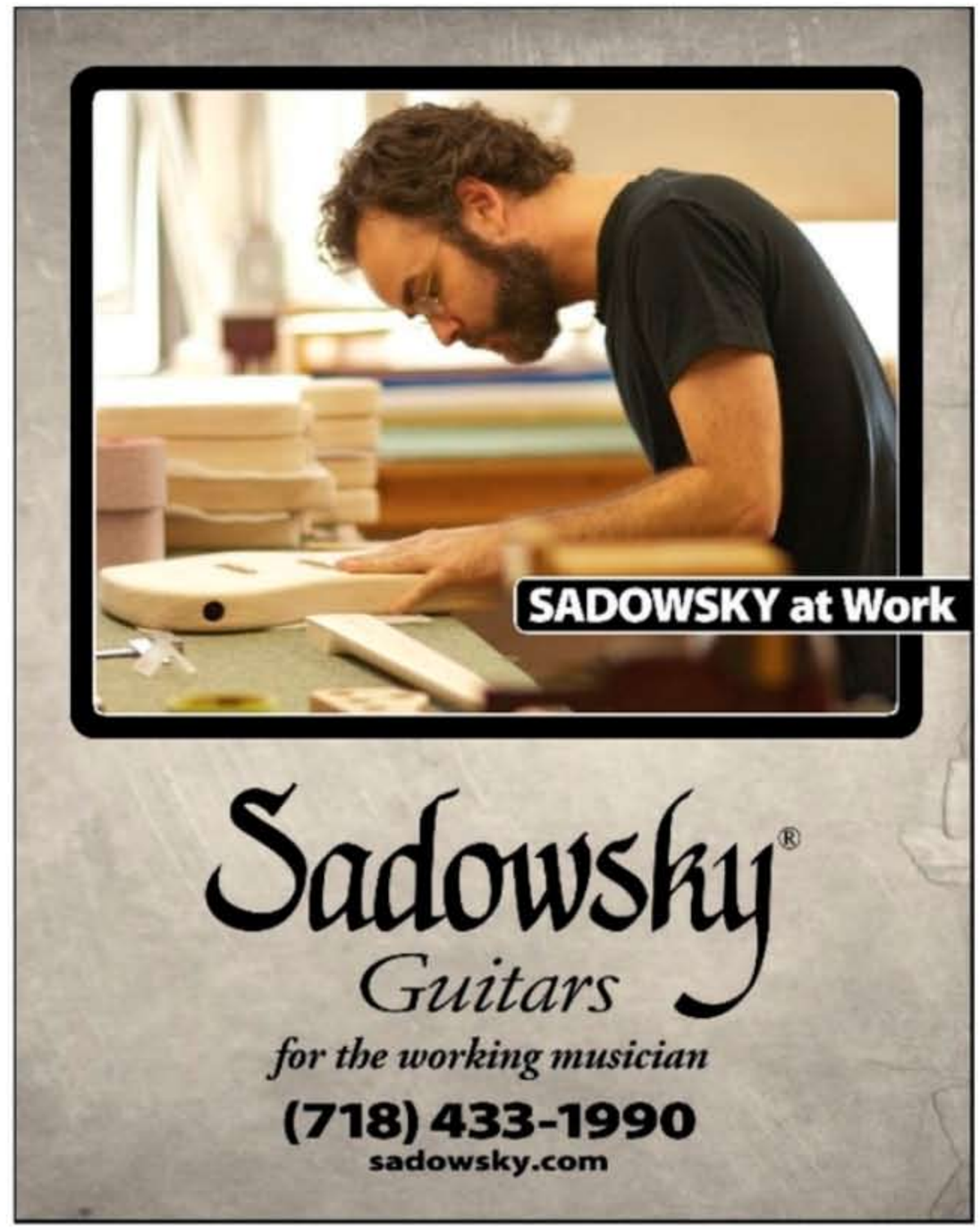
That's one of the old tunings. I wrote a song called "Somewhere," and started showing those guys weird tunings. They started experimenting on their own with tunings, too.

You're referring to the *EEBBBB* drone tuning that's used on "My Wave"?

Exactly. Those all come from the original tuning. It's really weird. I've always messed around with guitars a lot more. Bass is boring to mess around with, and barely anybody can hear what the hell you're doing. Usually when those guys tune their guitars weird, I don't. I'll tune completely differently so I can play the song differently. I kind of copped out on "Been Away Too Long" and double-tuned like that because I wanted the bridge to sound really f'd up. It's not as f'd up as I wanted, though.

What effect do you use on the bridge?

The sound on the recording is simply the effect of that weird tuning going through a busted old Roland distortion/wah pedal. The wah doesn't work, and the pedal always sounds really cantankerous, like the battery is dying. Onstage



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(L-R) Ben Shepherd, Chris Cornell, Kim Thayil, Matt Cameron

the sound is my Mesa Boogie V-Twin preamp pedal and a Dunlop Cry Baby Bass Wah.

"By Crooked Steps" is a classic Soundgarden rocker. The line is simple, but the 5/4 time makes it sound really cool.

I totally agree. When Matt showed it to me, I said, "That's the exactly the kind of song that makes me want to play music again." It's got that cool feeling like when we were teenagers.

The riff is hypnotic.

I don't remember what I did on the record, but there's a closed way of playing it, and there's an open way. You can go from the 10th to the 12th fret up to the high *E*—the octave, or, you can lift your finger from the 10th fret and hit the open *E* string. That adds a totally different bottom end.

When you're playing something like that, do you hear the sound of the riff in your head, or do you actually count it out in groups of two, three, or five?

We take the time to work out the arrangements—in fact, we tend to over-arrange—but I don't count when we're actually performing. I go by feeling. Once you get into the groove, it's more of a matter of breathing than counting. If you're counting then you're not really performing. When you get your body, mind, hands, and notes all working together—then you're performing.

What's the most important facet of performing Soundgarden songs?

You can't ignore any of the facets. It's organic, it's mathematical, it's technical, and it's physical. If you ignore any one of those things, you're going to wipe out. Blow the mathematics, and you're going to play the wrong part at the wrong time. You'll wear yourself out physically if you're playing a fast part and the pace of your breathing is wrong. You can totally ruin the circle if you don't balance it all out.

What's the best thing about being back in the saddle with Soundgarden?

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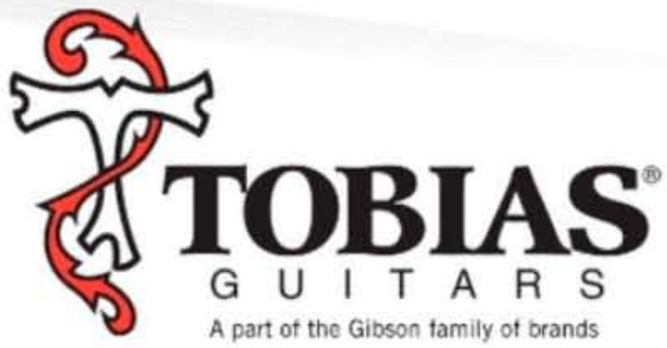


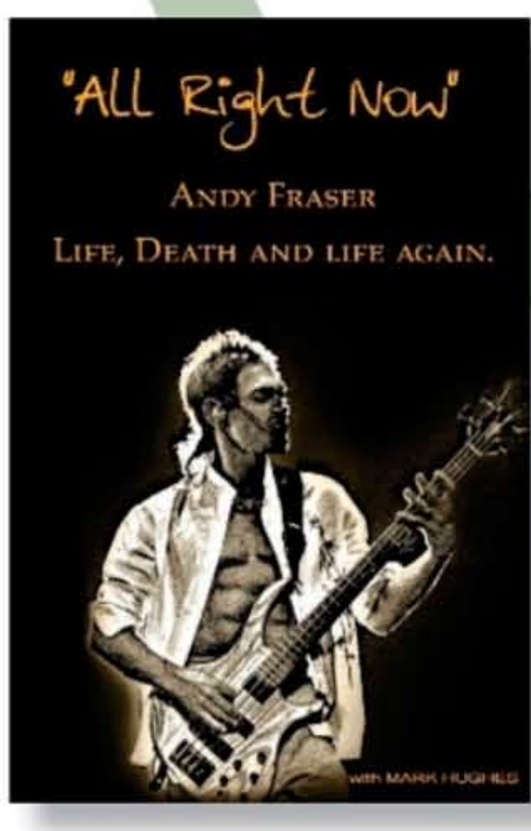
The new Toby's are available in 4-string and 5-string versions and a wide range of color options. Tobias™ is part of the Gibson family of brands. For more information and a retailer near you, visit **www.epiphone.com/tobias** or call **1-800-4GIBSON**.

FREE AT LAST

ANDY FRASER

BY KEN SHARP

IN THE EARLY '70S, ARMED WITH SEMINAL songs like "All Right Now" and "Fire and Water," Free electrified the rock world with its less-is-more brand of fiery blues rock. Anchoring Free's sound was Andy Fraser, who supplied arresting bass lines notable for their economy, simplicity, and effectiveness. Fraser recently co-authored a book charting his career, *All Right Now: Life, Death and Life Again* [Mctrax Books, 2012].



Your first instrument wasn't bass.

I started piano tuition when I was five—which seems young now, but boy, was I insistent. I played piano until I was 11 or 12. All the cool kids in grammar school had guitars and drums, so I did, too. When I got a guitar and started fiddling around, I realized, "Okay, that note goes with this note ..." and managed to make sense of it from the piano point of view, which really helped.

What led you from guitar to bass?

Diplomacy. Everyone wanted to be the cool kid who played guitar, or who was a singer, or who played drums. I just tuned my guitar down an octave and became the bass player to stop the arguments. What really sealed it was joining John Mayall's band.

How did that come about?

I used to go to college with Sappho Korner, and so I met Alexis [Korner, blues guitarist]. I would hang around his house and play his guitars. Apparently, John Mayall called him and said, "Alexis, I need a bass player right away." He said, "There's this kid who hangs around the house and plays guitar." So he got me to go over with a cheap bass that I had, and I got the job. He bought me a new bass the next day.

Did playing bass come naturally?

Yeah. I suppose I have to say I'm a bass player now because it's so easy, but I never thought of myself as a bass player; I never actually played bass parts. I probably drove drummers nuts. My bass parts tended to augment the singer or the songs more than the drums. I'd do something that would

follow Paul [Rodgers] or lead him, as opposed to have anything to do with the drums. The drums would just have to keep time.

When first learning to play, who were your models as bass players?

Oh, plenty. Pretty much the bass players on the Motown stuff, James Jamerson, all those Stax/Volt records. In lots of Motown songs, with players like James Jamerson, you can't help but notice the bass. "What's Goin' On" by Marvin Gaye has a great bass part. What's amazing is finding out the back story behind it. They had to drag him into the session kicking and screaming because he had another gig. After the gig, they took him into the studio around midnight, and he lay on the floor and played bass to the track. Amazing. I liked Carol Kaye, and I also learned a lot from Paul McCartney—from the beginning of the Beatles to when he got into *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper*. By that time the bass was the whole thing. I also liked John Entwistle; I remember being at school and hearing "My Generation," and I went, "There's a bass solo after the first chorus!" I thought, Wow, I didn't know you could do that. All those players

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helped mold me into the player I am.

Do you find it ironic that a bass player wrote one of rock's best guitar riffs with "All Right Now"?

Yes, and add on top of that, I never thought of myself as a bass player. With "All Right Now," I was just trying to do my best Pete Townshend. I always loved his chord playing, and I thought, "Hey, I'll be Pete Townshend for a minute!" It's incredible to me, and us at the time, that "All Right Now" was a single. We thought it was a throwaway and argued against it being released. It was one of the few arguments we lost with Chris Blackwell of Island Records.

Your bass part before Paul Kossoff's solo is a distinctive hook in itself. How did you come up with that figure?

My job as a bass player for that part was simply to put in a bed that suggested the chord changes and supply enough support for Koss to riff over the top. That's all it was, and it worked out very well.

How did you approach playing bass in Free?

My approach was very minimalistic; I only did what was appropriate for the song itself. My general rule of thumb as kind of the arranger in the band was to say, "You play in this space, I'll play in this space," and everyone has freedom within those spaces. It helped maintain a simplicity and freedom for individuals and an arrangement that worked that didn't require a lot of filling in. Letting the music breathe was important.

In a band like Free, simplicity is key.

Being simple is never easy. The less that's on there, the bigger each thing sounds. If it doesn't even need a bass part, don't put one on. It doesn't have to be there just because you're a bass player. For example, in "All Right Now," the verses have always sounded better with me not playing anything. So I never had a problem with that. With a three-piece band and a singer, you don't really have the option of more, anyway. A lot of the things I would do on the bass would make up for the fact that we didn't have a second guitarist or a live piano player. I wasn't thinking like a bass player at all; that was the last thing I was doing. The bass just happened to be in my hand. But if there were a piano or a tambourine or whatever, I'd just try to make it come together. I would do whatever was necessary. If there was some kind of part that was needed and Kossoff had his hands full, then I would do it on the bass. I tried to do only what was appropriate, and sometimes that meant not playing at all. It made the guitar sound bigger and the bass sound bigger when it actually came in. With something like "The Stealer," I think about song first, and then, "What does the bass need to do to make the song work?"

Free drummer Simon Kirke plays economically, and leaves a lot of space. Did that help you craft your voice as a bass player?

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Simon is like a metronome. I didn't appreciate him so much until I played with Jason Bonham—who's a fine drummer, but my whole job suddenly became to grab a hold of him and keep him solid in time. Simon was always so in time it allowed me freedom to flow over it. Playing bass in Free with a drummer like Simon, there was a sense of the arrangement being complementary to everybody, however simple it was. Simon was a real plus from that point of view.

What was your typical bass setup in Free?

My main bass was a Gibson EB-3. That was a mainstay until it got stolen. I liked the EB-3 because it was small and I'm small; it was very easy to play. To me, a Fender seems halfway toward a double bass. I always used a Marshall amp, and I tended to use Rotosound strings. I never played with a pick, just my fingers. Recently, I got hooked on a Tobias bass; it's a small bass, very much like the EB-3.

Today, do you keep an ear out for groundbreaking bass players?

There are lots of good bass players out there, but my whole approach today is to listen to a song, its

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Feelin' Alright ... circa '71

singer and arrangement, and figure out how the bass fits in within that, and really, how everything fits in. Today, when a bass needs to be put on a song, I pick it up and play it; otherwise I don't bother playing or practicing. I still have fun playing bass, mainly because it comes easy for me. It's something I can do without thinking.

Any advice for budding bass players?

Do what's best for the song and that's all you need to do. Don't show off. Also, be yourself. That can be very difficult in this world, where we're so affected by our peers. But there's no one else like you. Everyone's unique; if you're honest with yourself, you'll be original. **BP**

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Roundup

Pedal Pushin'

BY BRIAN FOX

FOR THIS MONTH'S ROUNDUP, WE TURN TO A HALF-DOZEN STOMPBOXES INTENDED TO TITILLATE the tone tweakers among us: an analog multi-effect from Electro-Harmonix, fuzz boxes from Tech 21 and Dwarfcraft, overdrives from Carl Martin and Fulltone, and an analog chorus from Jacques.

ELECTRO-HARMONIX TONE TATTOO

Street $220
Description Analog multi-effect combining the Electro-Harmonix Metal Muff fuzz, Neo Clone chorus, and Memory Toy delay
Bottom Line The Tone Tattoo offers lots of bang for the buck, and leaves us jonesing for a bass-centric Electro-Harmonix multi-effect.
Contact ehx.com

The Electro-Harmonix Tone Tattoo is a bit of an anomaly in these digital days of USB jacks and programmable pedals, as it's an analog multi-effect. It's the first of its type from E-H, and it combines three of the company's most popular pedals: the Metal Muff fuzz, the Neo Clone chorus, and the Memory Toy delay.

True to E-H form, the Tone Tattoo is housed in an industrial-style box

SPECIFICATIONS

TONE TATTOO

Controls Metal Muff, DRIVE, BASS (318.5dB @ 105Hz), TREBLE (320dB @ 700Hz), SCOOP (LO: -7.5dB @ 1.2kHz; HI, -11dB @ 1.2kHz), GATE, THRESHOLD, VOLUME; Neo Clone, RATE (0.4Hz-9Hz), DEPTH; Memory Toy, DELAY (30-550mS), FEEDBACK, BLEND, GAIN (+23dB)
Power 9v DC (no battery)
Switching Buffered bypass

with sweet graphics, color-coded for each effect: green for fuzz, blue for chorus, and red for delay. Following the signal chain from the right, the first effect is the fuzz, followed by chorus, followed by the delay. Each effect is selected via its own individual footswitch. The pedal's ergonomics are hard to fault, with an input jack on the right, an output jack on the left, and a 9V DC power adapter jack on the top side (no batteries for this stompbox). The knobs and footswitches are solid, and the Metal Muff's SCOOP mini toggle switch is tucked between knobs that would likely keep it safe if the pedal were tossed in and out of a gig bag.

With the Metal Muff fuzz in pole position, it feels as if the Tone Tattoo is targeting guitar players more than bassists. Be that as it may, there's still a lot for a bass player to love about the pedal. While not my favorite fuzz from E-H (that would be the Bass Big Muff Pi), the Metal Muff is a perfectly fine bass fuzz; it can sound tinny in certain settings, but bumping its bass control and flicking its SCOOP switch to HI do a lot to tamp down overly harsh highs. If you're looking for grunt or a subtle goosing of your midrange, the Metal Muff's probably not for you. But if you're looking for face-melting fuzz, this Muff's got that in spades.

The Neo Clone—E-H's popular chorus pedal, makes up stage two of the Tone Tattoo. No complex controls here, just a RATE knob and a DEPTH button. Engaged with a moderate RATE setting and DEPTH button set low (so the accompanying LED light glows red), the Neo Clone has a subtle, swirling chorus; setting the DEPTH button at high (so the LED glows green), the chorus takes on a deeper psychedelic churn. Both on their own and combined with the Tone Tattoo's other effects, the pedal's chorus effects go a long way in making the Tone Tattoo worthwhile.

Delay is an effect that's never played a big part of my tone, but the Memory Toy stage of the Tone Tattoo makes me feel like I've been missing out on a whole lot of fun. For ambient solo work, a dash of delay can be a bassist's best friend, and the Memory Toy offers a wide range of controls over delay time, the amount of echo, dry-to-wet ratio, etc.

All told, the Tone Tattoo is a whole lot of fun in a self-contained—and affordable—package. While it's a worthy buy on its on merits, the Tone Tattoo is most exciting in that it opens the door for more analog multi-effect pedals from Electro-Harmonix. Hey, E-H—package your Bass Big Muff Pi, BassBalls, and Octave Multiplexer pedals in a single chassis, and I just might get your logo tattoo'd somewhere special. . . .

SPECIFICATIONS

BASS BOOST FUZZ

Controls LEVEL, TONE (low pass filter, 10kH–1kHz), DRIVE, +CLEAN, BOOST
Power 9v DC or battery
Switching Buffered bypass

TECH 21 BASS BOOST FUZZ

Street $150
Description Bass-oriented analog fuzz with 21dB clean boost
Bottom Line The Bass Boost Fuzz doles out delicious blends of fuzz and fundamental, and its ancillary BOOST control is a bassist's best friend in moments of need.
Contact tech21nyc.com

Like so many others, we're big fans of Tech 21's SansAmp Bass Driver DI, and we've been equally impressed by more recent pedal offerings like the Red Ripper dynamically-controlled distortion and the Bass Boost Chorus. [Note: As our January '13 review of the formidable VT Bass 1969 amplifier attests, the company knows how to make righteous rigs in their own right, as well.]

The latest from Tech 21 is the Bass Boost Fuzz, which seeks to take the sound of classic germanium-transistor fuzz boxes—preferred by many tone nerds over silicon-transistor fuzzes for their smoother, more harmonically rich distortion—and tweak the tone so it works better in the bass space. Like the Bass Boost Chorus, the Bass Boost Fuzz also offers 21dB of clean boost.

Dressed in a blue and white powder coat, the Bass Boost Fuzz has a clean look and layout, with fuzz and blend controls in a top row of knobs and the boost control just below. A feature we dug about the Bass Boost Chorus was the ability to turn down the chorus effect and use the pedal as a clean boost. By installing a discrete boost footswitch on the Bass Boos Fuzz, Tech 21 has made a good idea even better.

But enough about clean—the BBF is all about getting down and dirty. As fuzz fans can attest, many pedals—especially those vintage models so coveted by guitarists—can suck out the signal's low end. It's a problem many players solve by running two signals, one clean and one dirty. The Bass Boost Fuzz effectively addresses the problem with its +CLEAN control, which blends a bass's clean and dirty signals.

With all knobs at noon and the boost flat, the Bass Boost Fuzz definitely dishes up some of the beefiest fuzz in the biz. The BBF behaves differently depending on the level you're feeding it with your bass, and the controls interact to make the pedal surprisingly deep in terms of the range of sounds it can produce. With +CLEAN controlling

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the clean-to-dirty ratio, DRIVE dictates the degree of fuzz, TONE acting as a low pass filter and shearing off overpowering upper frequencies, and LEVEL controls the overall output level, the BBF has a surprising range of tones, all in a package that's well-built, user-friendly, and compact.

Even at extreme settings—with the TONE and DRIVE cranked and +CLEAN eased back—the BBF maintains a deeply satisfying low end anchor for the fuzz.

With the Bass Boost Fuzz, Tech 21 has struck the balance between fuzz and fundamental that often eludes bass players. If you're looking for an affordable, reliable, and versatile fuzz pedal with the bonus of a clean boost, the Bass Boost Fuzz is the pedal for you.

DWARFCRAFT DEVICES EAU CLAIRE THUNDER

Street $275
Description Boutique fuzz box with freaky stomp-triggered feedback loop.
Bottom Line The Eau Claire Thunder delivers a wide range of wild fuzz sounds, each more demented than the next.
Contact dwarfcraft.com

And now for something completely different. From the wilds of Wisconsin and the delightfully warped minds at Dwarfcraft Devices comes the Eau Claire Thunder, a pedal modeled on classic fuzz boxes like the Big Muff, but with a few twists.

Kicking the BYPASS footswitch and working the VOLUME, TONE, and DISTORTION knobs, the Eau Claire Thunder's fuzz has a slightly mid-scooped character, with ample bass and an aggressive high-end bite. The TRIM control is designed to keep the pedal from sounding too squishy when fed by super-hot pickups; I didn't feel like I had a problem with the few active basses I played with the ECT, so I left the knob mostly at noon.

The Eau Claire Thunder feels dangerous—there's a unhinged character to the fuzz, and playing with the pedal turned this tame tone twiddler into a mad scientist within seconds. Aside from the "basic" fuzz sound engaged by the BYPASS footswitch, there's the TONEBLAST switch, which bypasses the pedal's tone circuit and beefs up the midrange in a big way. It's a boost that's great for moments when you want to jump out of the mix—not that you'll be anything but in-your-face with this pedal. . . .

The TIMEWARP switch lends yet another color to the Eau Claire Thunder, giving it a darker, more

SPECIFICATIONS

EAU CLAIRE THUNDER

Controls TRIM, FEEDBACK TUNE, TIMEWARP switch, VOLUME, TONE, DISTORTION
Footswitches BYPASS, TONEBLAST, FEEDBACK
Power 9v DC (no battery)
Switching Buffered bypass

sinister sound. The FEEDBACK footswitch and FEEDBACK TUNE knob is where things start going sideways with the ECT, and in the best sort of way. Depressing the footswitch creates a feedback loop within the pedal, and twisting the FEEDBACK TUNE knob controls the pitch of the ungodly howl the pedal pumps out. If tone torture is your thing, the Eau Claire Thunder is the ultimate device of depravity.

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CARL MARTIN BASS DRIVE

Street $272
Description Bass preamp/overdrive with 3-bands of EQ and a 12AX7 preamp tube.
Bottom Line In the land of tube-loaded bass overdrives, the Bass Drive has emerged perched to rule the roost.
Contact carlmartin.com

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SPECIFICATIONS

BASS DRIVE

Controls LEVEL, BASS (36dB @ 63Hz), MIDDLE (36db @ 1kHz), HIGH (36dB @ 4kHz), GAIN
Power 12v AC (no battery)
Switching Buffered bypass

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~ Chick Corea
(Electrik Band, Miles Davis, Return to Forever)

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~ Jim Warren
(Radiohead, Arcade Fire, Nine Inch Nails)

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~ Joel Lonky
(Rob Zombie, Goo Goo Dolls, P. Diddy, Billy Idol)

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~ Dave Natale
(Rolling Stones, Joe Cocker Lionel Richie, Fleetwood Mac)

"The Radial JDX is almost too good to be true. The artists hear the sound they are playing and I'm not fighting mic coloration any more. I just plug it in & turn it up."
~ Jon Garber
(Rascal Flatts, Brad Paisley, The Band Perry, Chely Wright)

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~ Rob Mailman
(FOH engineer - Santana)

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SPECIFICATIONS

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Power 9v DC or battery
Switching Buffered bypass

to flex, overdrive is the way to go. With three bands of EQ and LEVEL and GAIN controls, there's little in the way of fancy accouterment on the Carl Martin Bass Drive, a bass overdrive with a 12AX7 preamp tube heart. Whether it's the no-frills feature set, or the pedal's large footprint, or its unusual power supply (it uses an AC power cable, rather than a DC adapter), I have to admit I was a little cold to the Bass Drive on arrival. But like the 12AX7 glowing under its grill, I soon warmed to the pedal's charms.

The Bass Drive earns every inch of its oversized footprint; three bands of EQ voiced for bass offer a colorful palette of tones, and the grit imparted by the GAIN control ranges from ornery grunt to aggressive grind. With the GAIN, MIDDLE, and HIGH rolled back, the Bass Drive wraps an otherwise raw and sterile bass 4-string in Snuggie-like fleece, softening the edges while allowing the bass to breathe. For prog-approved tones, bumping up the MIDDLE and GAIN fetches a clang close to the edge.

Carl Martin set out to recreate the sounds of classic rock bass gods like John Entwistle and Jack Bruce. With the Bass Drive, it has delivered a distinguished tone tool capable of empowering the would-be bass deities among us.

FULLTONE SECRET FREQ.

Street $190
Description Overdrive with an eye toward midrange-rich lead tones from the '70s.
Bottom Line The Secret Freq. might be a guitarist's best friend, but it pulls double duty as a buddy to bassists, as well.
Contact fulltone.com

Fulltone may have discontinued its Bass-Drive Mosfet pedal, but it doesn't mean there aren't other options from Fulltone's tasty menu of overdrive and distortion pedals. One option is the Secret Freq. The pedal's Freq-iness comes from its unique FREQ. knob, which offers 20dB of midrange boost aimed at recreating the lead tones of such studio savants as Brian May and Tom Scholz.

Though not voiced specifically for bass, the Secret Freq.'s midrange boost can be a useful tool for carving sonic space in a "lead bass" setting. Boosting HIGHS, the distortion takes on a searing character that's guaranteed to make any guitarist jealous (though deep down, they probably already are). In all settings, the Secret Freq. does a good job maintaining low end on bass.

SPECIFICATIONS

MEISTERSINGER

Controls RATE, DEPTH, E. LEVEL
Power 9v DC or battery
Switching True bypass

JACQUES MEISTERSINGER

Street $215
Description Analog chorus
Bottom Line In the chorus of chorus pedals, the Meistersinger deserves a solo spot.
Contact jacquespedals.com

Like a "Greatest Hits" of chorus, the Jacques Meistersinger seeks to take features of iconic chorus pedals and squeeze all of their best attributes in a single stompbox. With its analog bucket-brigade technology, the Meistersinger delivers warm, creamy textures that span from celestial and shimmery to tidal and roiled. Housed in a dense metal chassis with a rugged rubber bottom, the Meistersinger is built like a Panzerkampfwagen (thank you, Wikipedia), and its tough plastic knobs and industrial-strength pots stand ready for battle. All told, the Meistersinger's luscious tones can make even the most jaded pedal snob take notice. **BP**

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WOODSHED

JAZZ CONCEPTS

State Of The Bass

Jimmie Blanton, Part 2

BY JOHN GOLDSBY

CHRISTIAN McBRIDE, VICTOR WOOTEN, MARCUS Miller, Victor Bailey, Jeff Berlin, Jaco Pastorius, Stanley Clarke, Ron Carter, Paul Chambers, James Jamerson, Scott LaFaro, Red Mitchell, Israel Crosby, Charles Mingus, Ray Brown, Oscar Pettiford. This list of giants suggests a thread woven through the hippest music of the last 70 years. A few thousand names are missing from the list, of course, but the thread leads back to one man: Jimmie Blanton. Even though Blanton died when he was only 23, he's known as the granddaddy of modern jazz bass playing. Last month, we looked at three classic licks from "Jack the Bear," a Blanton feature with the Duke Ellington band. This month, let's check out four more signature Blanton solo lines.

Blanton plays the licks in **Examples 1 and 2** on several different versions of "Pitter, Panther, Patter" [*Solos, Duets and Trios,* RCA/Bluebird], a bass and piano duet that he recorded with Ellington in 1940. Ellington probably taught Blanton the tricky duet arrangement's basic bass melody by ear, and Blanton added his own twists and turns to his accompaniment and solo lines. Blanton plays many of the same licks—albeit with slight alterations—in the same solo spots in all three takes.

Example 1 comes 0:50 into the track, with Ellington giving Blanton a two-bar break at the end of a chorus. When I first heard these recordings years ago, this lick in particular caught my ear, and I really wanted to "take it off the record." It remains one of my go-to licks when I'm playing a break on a *G7* chord in a medium swing tempo. As proof of the lick's ear-catching nature, I've also heard everyone from Ray Brown to Ron Carter play their own variations.

Example 2 shows Blanton's next two-bar break, which arrives at 1:00. The high *G* is not a harmonic; Blanton is fingering the note, pulling hard and yanking the tone out of the gut string. He was obviously used to pulling a big sound out of his unamplified bass with the big band, and he didn't pull any punches when he got his chance to record with Maestro

INFO

JOHN GOLDSBY

Check out John playing "Sepia Panorama" and more timeless Ellington/Blanton music with the American Jazz Orchestra on *Ellington Classics* [Atlantic, 1988], and visit John's website for bass news and information, plus John's recording of "Pitter, Panther, Patter." **johngoldsby.com**

CONNECT

- Listen to Ellington and Blanton play "Pitter, Panther, Patter."
- Listen to John Goldsby and Bill Mays play "Pitter, Panther, Patter," with John's alternate solo changes.
- Read Donald Clarke's take on the ASCAP strike of 1940 and the rise and fall of popular music.
- Get a taste of the Ellington/Ray Brown tribute to Jimmie Blanton, *This One's for Blanton!*

bassplayer.com/march2013

Ellington in this intimate duo setting.

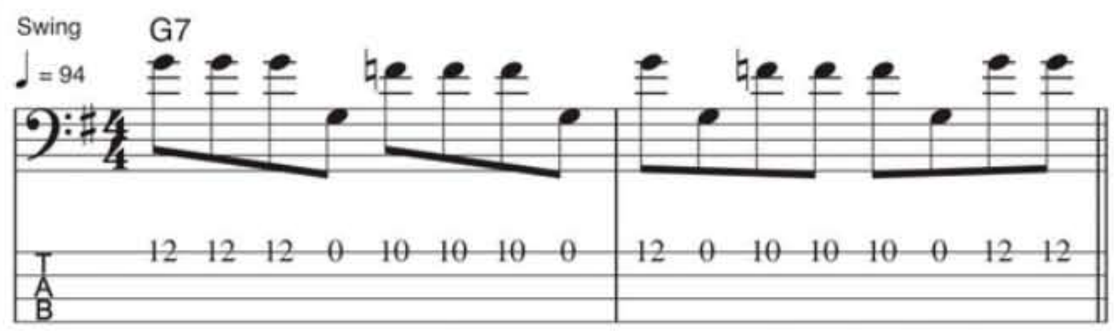
Example 3 shows Blanton's lick at 0:22 in "Sepia Panorama" (see sidebar), from *The Blanton-Webster Band* [RCA]. The band is screaming, and then there's the abrupt break—Blanton's got it! He lays into a repeated high *F* in a triplet pattern, and then springs up into the stratosphere. It was uncommon for a bassist in 1940 to jump up to a high *A*, but Blanton nails it.

Listen to the original, and hear Blanton somersaulting all over the bass behind Ellington's tinkling piano solo. Blanton is not primarily known as an interactive bass player, but I think this shows a spark of creative interaction that set him apart from the other bassists of the era. Blanton's playing underneath Ellington's lines is clever—like a boxer sparring, jabbing, and punching out beautiful bass melodies everywhere.

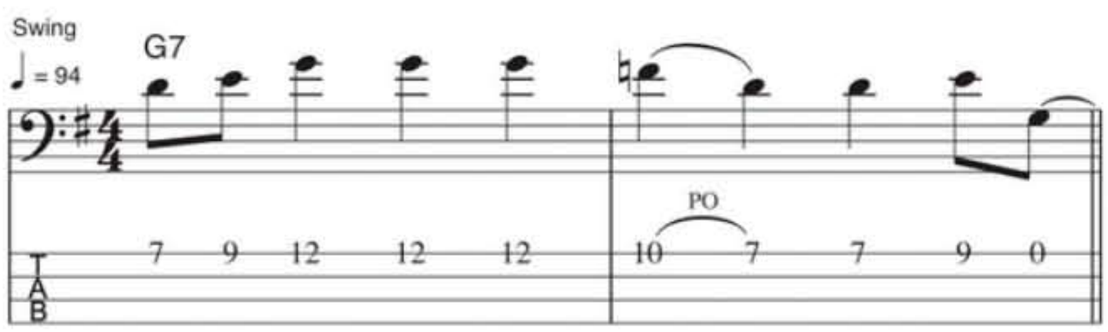
Example 4 comes at 2:58, toward the end of the "Sepia Panorama" track. Here Blanton plays alone except for light brush work from drummer Sonny Greer. Beginning on beat *four* of bar 1, Blanton starts a *hemiola*, or cross-rhythm: The eighth-note line beginning on beat *four* is in triplets (rhythmic groupings of three), but the melodic phrase repeats a four-note grouping (*B♭, D, E♭, F*). The four-note phrase played in triplets creates the feeling of "taking it out" rhythmically, or playing across the bar line.

Wherever you sit on the timeline of bass players, know that your musical bloodline contains elements of the Jimmie Blanton legacy. Bassists have made great technical strides since Blanton, playing incredible grooves and solos, and often taking the bass to the front of the bandstand. However, Blanton was the man who made the current state of the bass possible for all of us. **BP**

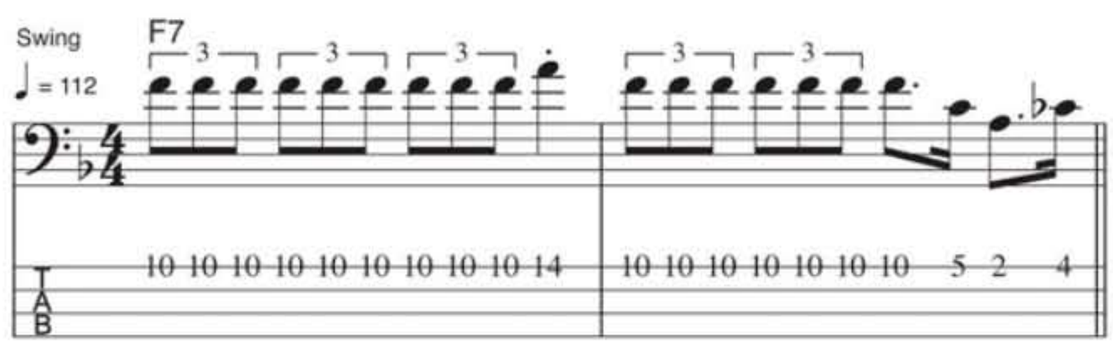
EX. 1



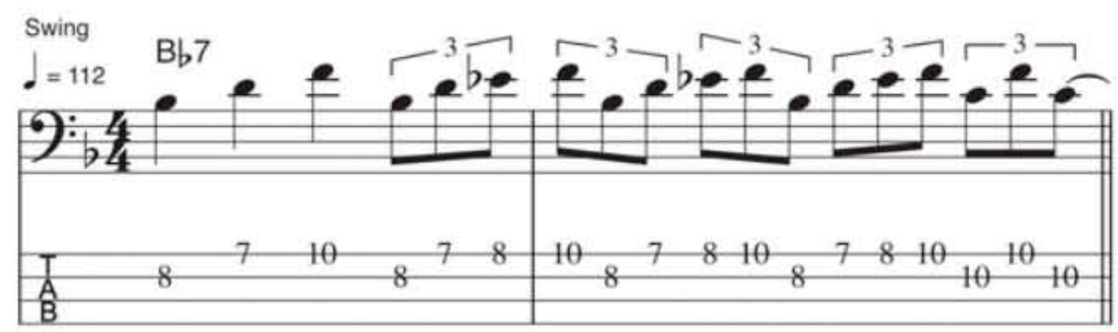
EX. 2



EX. 3



EX. 4



Plan B: "A Train"

YOU PROBABLY KNOW THE SWING standard "Take the A Train," which is played by school bands, swing dance bands, and lounge-lizard jump bands everywhere. You might even know that "Take the A Train" was the Ellington band's theme song for many years. Written by composer Billy Strayhorn, who was Ellington's right-hand man, the tune was adopted in 1940 as the theme song for legal reasons.

Before "A Train," the band's theme song was the Ellington composition "Sepia Panorama." In 1940, the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) tried to raise the rate that composers received when their music was played on the radio. The whole industry—radio stations, record companies, musicians, and performing rights societies—became embroiled in a legal tussle over broadcast licensing fees. Since Ellington was an ASCAP composer, he wasn't allowed to play his compositions on the radio for the duration of the legal proceedings.

In order to keep his band performing live on the radio, Duke had to compile an entirely new non-ASCAP band book, and find a new theme song to replace "Sepia Panorama," which featured Jimmie Blanton. Strayhorn, who belonged to the rival performing rights organization Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI), composed many great songs for Ellington during this period, including the new theme song, "Take the A Train." Imagine if the bass feature "Sepia Panorama" had remained the Ellington theme and had become as ubiquitous as "Take the A Train"—we might still be playing it at dances and hearing marching bands perform it at high school football games!

BLUES YOU CAN USE

Jack Meyers

Outside The Box

BY ED FRIEDLAND

I RECENTLY RECEIVED AN EMAIL FROM A READER, John Schroder, hipping me to a blues bassist named Jack Meyers. While I had heard his playing on Junior Wells/Buddy Guy recordings from the 1960s, true to the fate of many bassists, his name was unknown to me. John wrote, "His playing on [Buddy Guy's] "I Had a Dream Last Night" still freaks me out—some outside stuff that is really deep inside." I searched out the slow 12/8 blues track, and within the first two bars, Meyers played an unusual approach pattern that signaled something was going to happen. I didn't have to wait long: In bar 4, Meyer exploded out of the silence with a bizarre chromatic fill that was so against the grain, the next sound I expected to hear was Buddy's guitar going upside his head. I was shocked, amused, and intrigued.

Like many musicians of his era, Jack Meyers' life and career is not well documented, but his work on the classic Junior Wells disc *Hoodoo Man Blues* establishes him as a bassist with formidable chops, a solid feel, creative ideas, and the balls to put them into action. While I have not been able to find evidence to support my theory, my best guess is Jack Meyers had a jazz background on upright bass. His melodic sense is definitely bop-infused, he routinely adds tritone substitutions and extended dominant root motion, and his technical facility brings to mind an upright bassist who picked up a Fender bass and said to himself, "Man, this thing is *easy!*" Meyers played many sessions for Chess Records, and backed Otis Rush, Big Walter Horton, Big Joe Turner, Charlie Musselwhite, Roosevelt Sykes, Sippie Wallace, and a

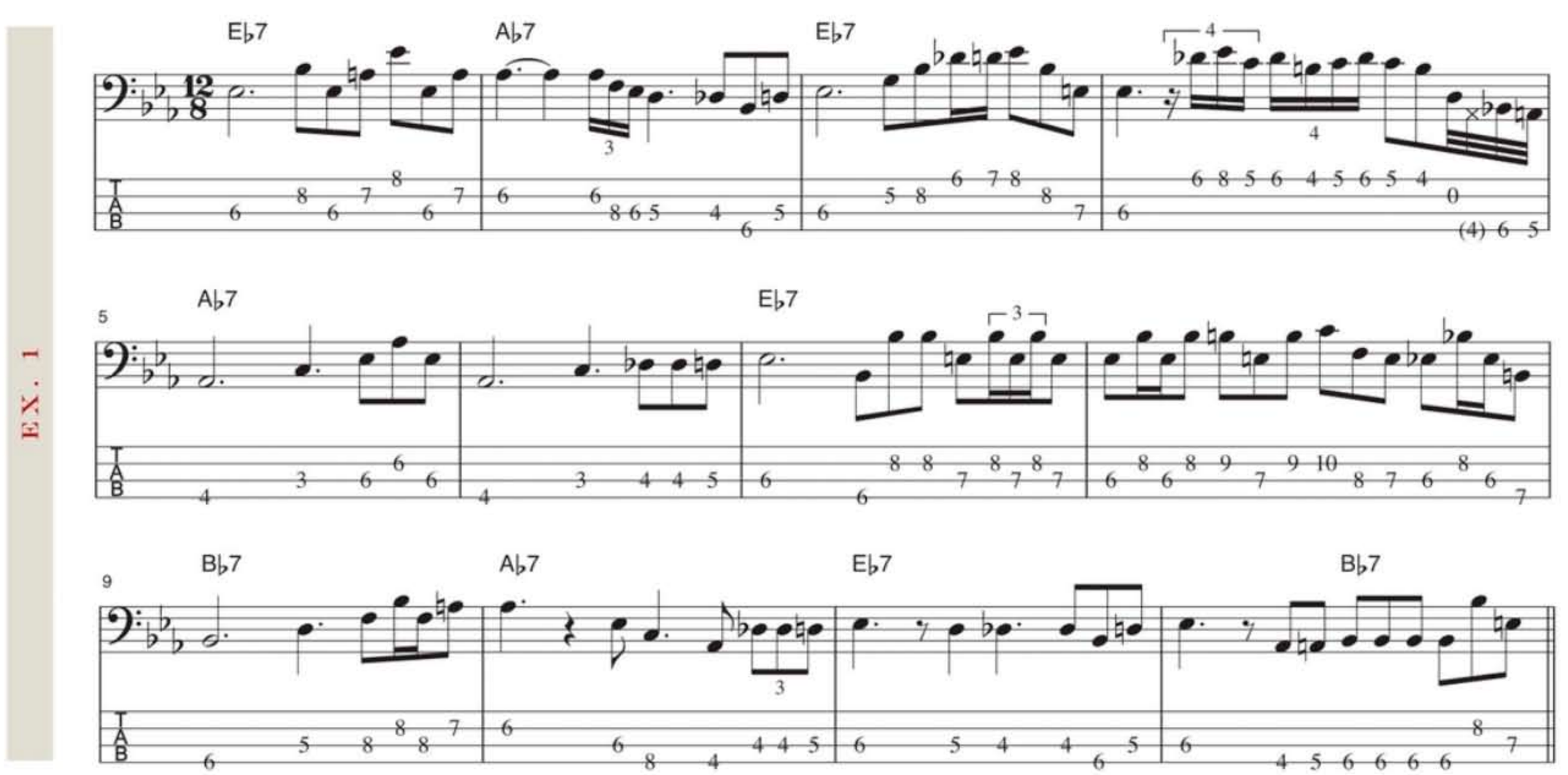
INFO

ED FRIEDLAND

Ed "The Bass Whisperer" Friedland plays inside, outside, and upside the box from his bass base in Austin, Texas. **edfriedland.com**

CONNECT

Hear Jack back Buddy Guy on "I Had a Dream Last Night." **bassplayer.com/march2013**



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host of others. There are a few clips on YouTube featuring Meyers playing with Otis Rush ("I Can't Quit You Baby") and Junior Wells ("What I Say"), and his playing comes through loud and strong.

While I've certainly made my case for toeing the line when it comes to blues bass playing, Jack Meyers' playing is a study in contrast. His approach on slow blues in particular seems almost iconoclastic. Where most players would leave space at the end of a four-bar phrase for the guitar soloist, Jack fills—sometimes unsubtly (to say the least!). Instead of the usually spare harmonic landscape of Chicago blues, Meyers reharmonizes, inserts extra changes, plays inversions instead of the root, and in general makes his presence known. I admire his chutzpah, but I wonder if someone else could get away with that kind of freedom on a blues gig. And yet, here is a man who broke several "cardinal rules" while playing on some of the most iconic blues recordings ever.

Let's take a look at a chorus of slow blues in *E*♭. If you reference Buddy Guy's "I Had a Dream Last Night" around the 3:23 mark, you'll hear something that resembles **Ex. 1**. The example is written in 12/8 time for ease of notation, but remember—what you feel as a quarter-note is actually notated as a dotted quarter-note. In bar 1, a tritone sets up a chromatic approach to the quick IV chord, which starts out innocently enough. But an abrupt 16th-note triplet lands on a *D*♮ (another tritone) on beat *three*—hello! Bar 3 remains fairly conventional, with the arpeggio going up to the high *E*♭, and returning back down with a chromatic approach to bar 4, after which all hell breaks loose. I scratched my head over this next lick for a while—not only over what he played, but why. The melodic profile of this lick is pure Coltrane, and stretching a 4-over-3 rhythmic pattern that culminates in a rocky downhill race to the downbeat of the next bar is an odd choice when you're backing up a Buddy Guy solo. The next two bars of IV chord are normal, but when the I chord returns, a strange fluttering rhythm signals a chromatic trip up and down before Meyers settles in to finish up the last four bars in relative peace.

All this happens in just one chorus of slow blues! Now imagine over six minutes of this, and you'll see why Jack Meyers wins my vote for President of the 5B club (Blues Bassists with Big Brass Balls). There is much more to be learned from this gem of a player who left this earthly plane on March 9, 2011. In the future, we'll look at more of his ideas as a way to think outside the box shape. **BP**

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BASSER INSTINCTS

Language Learning

BY JEFF BERLIN

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL! TWO LETTERS caught my eye as the calendar advanced to 2013.

Jon wrote, "I would like to discuss groove. In his video *Groove Workshop* [Hudson Music, 2008], Victor Wooten discusses music as a language, a concept we would all agree with. Vic points out that during our first few years of existence, we humans learn our first language not in class or in lessons but by being exposed to "professional" speakers. We, in effect, get thrown into the groove from the very start. We learn by grooving. Vic extrapolates this approach to music, wherein he says that the best way to learn is by grooving. I tend to agree.

"In addition, he mentions that he's almost always grooving when he practices. However, he is Victor Lemonte Wooten, and the rest of us mere mortals can only hope to achieve a fluency like his. Just my two cents."

Hi, Jon. I agree with Victor's assessment of music as a language. My thought is, knowing that music is a language isn't going to help you to improve in that language. Everybody knows music is a language, but knowing this can't make you a better player. As an example, math also is a language, but knowing that it is doesn't help you to learn it.

Let's discuss language for a moment. If learning a language by ear from birth is such a beneficial method (which it is), notice that everyone who learned this way eventually goes to school to learn it academically. Remember Appalachian Mountain history, the hill people or hillbillies? They learned the English language by ear from birth, but didn't have the benefit of a follow-up academic education. As a result, these people were illiterate and barely functional in the spoken language. Similarly, many musicians who learn how to play only by ear are mostly musically illiterate and barely functional as players. How can you play with feel or groove if you don't know how your instrument works? And if you do know how your instrument works, and if music content isn't of any interest to you, then what are you paying money to learn? Write me and let me know at the address below.

If you sincerely believe music is a language, then learn it like one. If every language in every discipline is learned academically, then music must be learned the same way.

Finally, regarding groove: Everyone can groove if they know how to play, practically without exception. I can prove this anytime, with anyone, anywhere. Groove is your automatic reward for learning how to play well. Groove doesn't require any special attention, certainly no more attention than any other facet of learning music requires. To prove this, I invite readers to send me the names of established bass players who you feel can play but who cannot groove. I predict you'll have a very short list. If almost every good bassist can groove and none of them acquired this skill via lessons or a school, then how did they learn how to groove? Answer: They learned on their own and for free. Remember this well!

Oscar S. wrote, "From all that you say in your columns, don't you think you're trying too hard to convince people to learn music? What if they don't want to learn music? What if they just like to own a bass and play it?"

Hi Oscar. I agree with you that many bass players aren't interested in learning about music. But the people who spend money to improve are the people I'm addressing when I say that academic music is the only 100% guaranteed method to help you to improve as a player. I can prove anywhere, anytime, that academic factual music lessons, or as I like to call it, the "Right Stuff," is the only foolproof way to become a better player, if you decide to pay someone to help you play better. If you aren't learning academic music, then I believe you aren't learning anything worthy of the money you invested to learn. The ironic truth is this: The electric bass world would benefit if teachers focused on music instead of performance-type lessons, which don't benefit their students. Everyone can perform eventually. It is only the bassists who haven't learned how to play who are stumped in their groove, their feel, or their time.

I will end this by asking you a question: When you spend money to help yourself improve as a player, what do you expect to get out of your investment? Write me with your answers, as well as any other questions or comments you may have, at talkingbassnotes@yahoo.com, and I will include your thoughts in upcoming articles. Thanks for reading. —JEFF

INFO

JEFF BERLIN

Since establishing himself as a jazz and fusion cornerstone with Bill Bruford, Allan Holdsworth, John McLaughlin, Billy Cobham, and Yes, Jeff Berlin has released eight solo albums and founded the Players School of Music in Clearwater, Florida. He is currently finishing his latest solo recording, as well as a trio CD with Scott Henderson and Dennis Chambers.

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Jazz Times Magazine

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TRANSCRIPTION

Sekou Bunch

"Funkin' For Jamaica (N.Y.)"

Bernard Wright, Marcus Miller & Sekou Bunch Team Up On Tom Browne's Urban Classic

BY CHRIS JISI

THE JAMAICA, QUEENS SECTION OF NEW YORK CITY IS RENOWNED FOR its rich musical heritage, owing to past residents such as James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Count Basie, Milt Hinton, Ella Fitzgerald, Lester Young, Billie Holiday, and James Brown. Still, it took until 1980 for local-grown talent to immortalize this happenin' 'hood via a hit song—something native rappers Q-Tip, LL Cool J, and 50 Cent would later do. Trumpeter Tom Browne was working on his gold-selling second album, *Love Approach*, for Dave Grusin's GRP label when he came up with a tune driven by a sinewy synth-bass line. Assembling at A&R Studios on Manhattan's 48th Street, Brown had his 16-year-old keyboardist, Bernard Wright, play the line on a Prophet 5, while his other "homeys"—Marcus Miller and guitarist Bobby Broome—played dueling parts [see sidebar]. Grusin manned the acoustic piano, with Buddy Williams on drums and Crusher Bennett on percussion. Not long after, Toni Smith came in to add her lyrics and soaring vocals (often mistaken for Chaka Khan), and "Funkin' for Jamaica" was born. The song hit No. 1 on the U.S. R&B charts, where it stayed for four weeks, while also cracking the Top Ten U.K. singles chart. It remains a defining global hit capturing the distinct brand of jazz-informed funk that emanated from the bustlin' borough.

Also figuring into the "Funkin'" equation was New York native Sekou Bunch, best known for his bass work with Quincy Jones, Michael Jackson, George Howard, and the Isley Brothers (as well as his appearance on the TV show *Survivor*). Bunch, seen in Browne's 1980 video for the song, became the trumpeter's road bassist and musical director, also co-writing and playing on Browne's 1981 hit "Thighs High." As such, he played the "Jamaica" bass line countless times live on his Jazz Bass, with his *E* string tuned down to *C*. The experience makes Bunch the perfect guide for the transcription below, which adapts the synth-bass part to 5-string bass. A quick performance note: Wright's part contains slide-offs ending a 5th or an octave below the note, a short span on keys. On a bass neck, though, those slides cover a lot of terrain. In the case of the octave *C*'s (as in bar 9), the low note ends up on a different string, which can be hammered to be heard. Likewise, the quick leaps from low *C* to *F* in bars 61–62, 89–90, 93–94, 97–98, and

101–102 are awkward but necessary stylistically for the slide-offs.

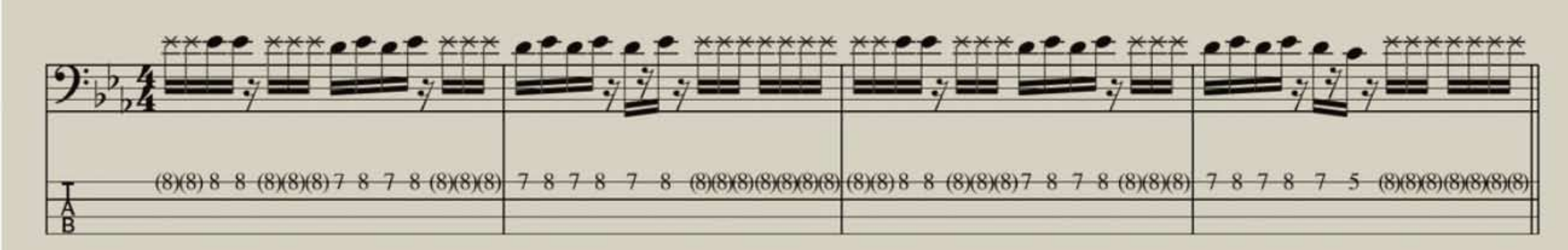
The track begins with eight measures of bluesy trumpet improv before the bass enters at letter **A**'s first verse, which features some rap-like chatter. Bars 9–16 establish the pattern of descending notes followed by bouncing octaves and a jazzy climb. Bunch stresses playing legato to simulate the effect of an analog synth. He also explains the part's swing feel: "The 16ths are swung slightly, but not to the triplet extent of jazz or bebop. It's more subtle, like a George Clinton/P-Funk synth-bass track: played with a lazy feel." At **B** the chorus changes kick in, but without vocals or much bass, making it a sort of pre-chorus. Toni Smith enters singing the chorus at letter **C**, as the bass line fleshes out via pickups and slide-offs. The second verse at **D** returns to the previous bass line, but with Wright offering tasty pickup variations, as in bars 68 and 72. Letter **E**'s repeated chorus and outro finds Wright stretching further with musical aplomb. He turns some of the *C* slide-offs into octave-5th-root phrases (bars 84, 100, 104, and 108, plus the alteration in 92); and he adds ear-grabbing walk-downs in 110, 116, 120, 122, and 124.

Bunch, who will soon release his third solo CD, *Sekou Bunch & Friends Celebrate Michael Jackson*, sums up, "Listen to the track first while reading through the music, to get the vibe of 'Nard's synth bass. Then get your fingerings together and play through the part. Keep in mind that the drums and everyone else are playing on top of the beat, but you need to lay back a tick or two. That's where the tension and the funk in the recording comes from." **BP**

Marcus Miller

THE PICKSLINGER

Marcus Miller was an emerging slapping force nicknamed "the Thumbslinger" when he arrived at his friend Tom Browne's session for "Jamaica." But after hearing Wright's synth bass part, his role became clear. He laughs, "I knew I had to stay completely out of the way of it." Instead, Miller grabbed a pick and plugged his '77 Jazz Bass into an MXR Phase 90 (recording direct to the board), and emulated a chicken pickin' guitar. For the intro and verses of the song (letters **A** and **D**), Marcus plays palm-muted, steady 16ths throughout, fingering the *C* on his *G* string but producing only clicks. The part is slowly panned right to left. For the choruses (letters **B**, **C**, and **E**), Miller came up with the repeated four-bar phrase shown in **Ex. 1**. It was then decided to have guitarist Bobby Broome match the line in harmony, with Miller panned left and Broome panned right. The only exception to this is the first eight measures of letter **E**, where both parts are removed for contrast, before re-entering at bar 89. Marcus—who seven years after the session would issue two albums with his own hometown-nodding group, the Jamaica Boys—advises, "Play the up and downstrokes with an even attack, and sit in the pocket."



"Funkin' For Jamaica (N.Y.)" by Tom Browne

Transcription by Chris Jisi

Medium R&B

♩ = 110

Intro

A

Cm7

15

21

27

A7♭5

33

B

A♭maj7 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7

42

Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7 A7♭5

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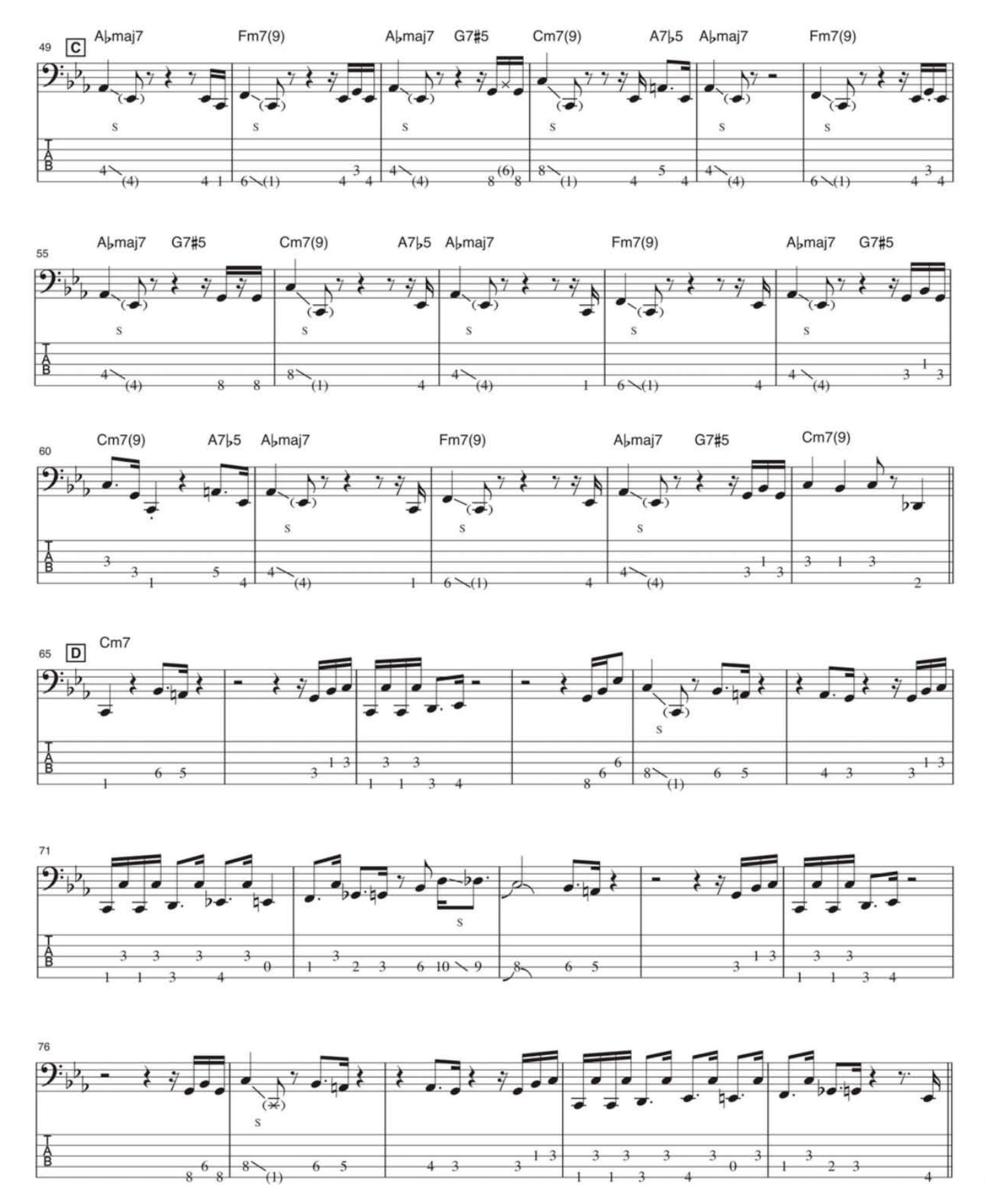
49
C
A♭maj7
Fm7(9)
A♭maj7
G7♯5
Cm7(9)
A7♭5
A♭maj7
Fm7(9)
55
A♭maj7
G7♯5
Cm7(9)
A7♭5
A♭maj7
Fm7(9)
A♭maj7
G7♯5
60
Cm7(9)
A7♭5
A♭maj7
Fm7(9)
A♭maj7
G7♯5
Cm7(9)
65
D
Cm7
71
76

81 E A♭maj7 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7

86 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7 Fm7(9)

91 A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5

96 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5

101 A♭maj7 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7 A7♭5 A♭maj7 Fm7(9)

107 A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5

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112 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5

117 A♭maj7 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7

122 Fm7(9) A♭maj7 G7♯5 Cm7(9) A7♭5 A♭maj7 Fm7(9) Fade

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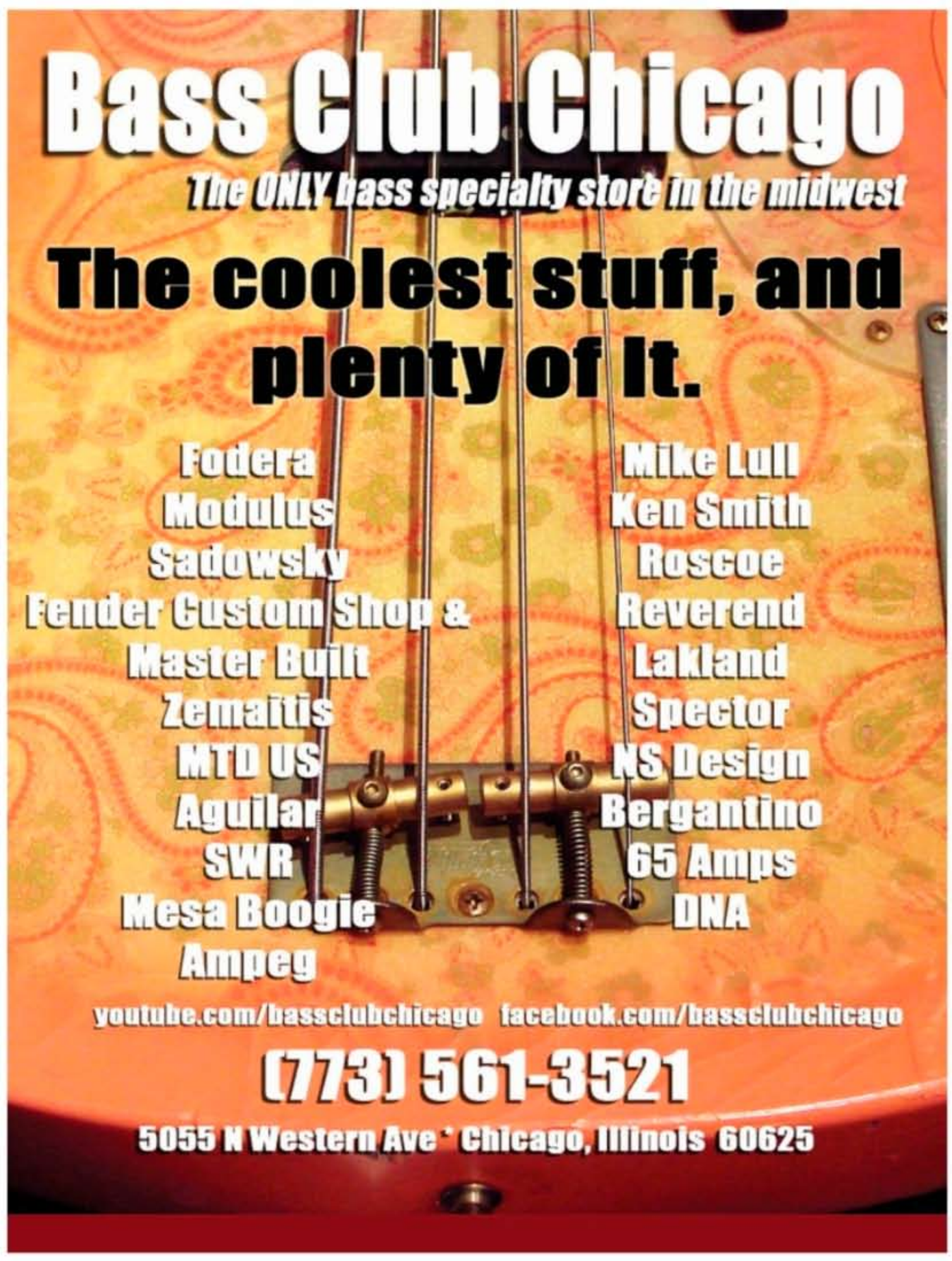

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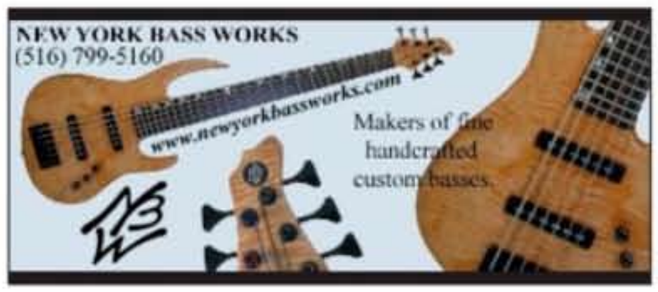

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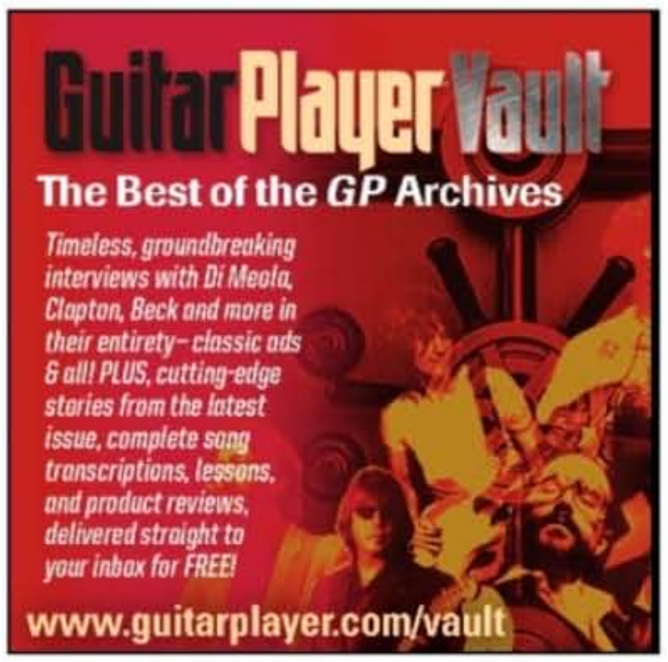

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Over the past 20-plus years with Bass Player, *Art Director and photographer Paul Haggard has accumulated a shelf full of broken cameras and some dusty memories. He will recount some over the next few columns until either he can't remember any more, or they fail to be interesting—whichever comes first.*

OUTTAKES

Photograph from April 2006

NO MATTER HOW MUCH ONE TRIES TO ARGUE THE FINER points of stadium architecture, from the stunning, innovative lines of the Bird's Nest and Water Cube in Beijing to the majestic collonades of the ancient Roman Coloseum, in the end you still have a big, uncomfortable building made of stone or concrete with really bad acoustics—bad for audiences and bad for performers—yet year after year, bands subject themselves and their fans to what could be frequently described as evenings of cavernous, booming discomfort.

Within even the most thoughtfully designed venues, there is only one thing less intrinsically ergonomic than the house seating, and that is the accomodations backstage: labyrinthine passages leading to chambers of tile and cement, better suited to sweating athletes than musicians. These areas, filled with the hustle and bustle of road crew and promotion staff and groupies and media all buzzing around, attending to the band like worker drones attending to the queen, are where the action really lies in the period before a big stadium show. Oh, and how appropriate this simile would be if only the band in subject *was* Queen, but in this case it was not. It was Aerosmith.

I was excited to meet Tom Hamilton as I was admitted past the crew entrance and escorted by a pretty, efficacious woman wielding a walkie-talkie through twisting, grey hallways past columns of drones wearing big black boots, shorts, and tattoos, pushing and pulling big black road cases here and there, and finally led to a door guarded by a man so large that it could only have been the headliner's dressing room.

The door opened and I was transported into an opulent sultan's tent wherein waited Tom with drummer Joey Kramer, engaged in their pre-show routine (which after years on the road they seemed to have honed down to almost nothing) and Jasmine, who was very busy managing the draperies and candles. After pleasantries, Joey wandered away, Tom went to select some wardrobe, and I was left with Jasmine, who fussed excessively over the exact placement of the candles on the coffee table.

"So, what do you do?" I finally asked after way too many seconds of awkward silence had passed.

"I'm in charge of ambience."

"Ambience? What do you mean?"

"You know, the couches, tapestries, rugs. All this stuff."

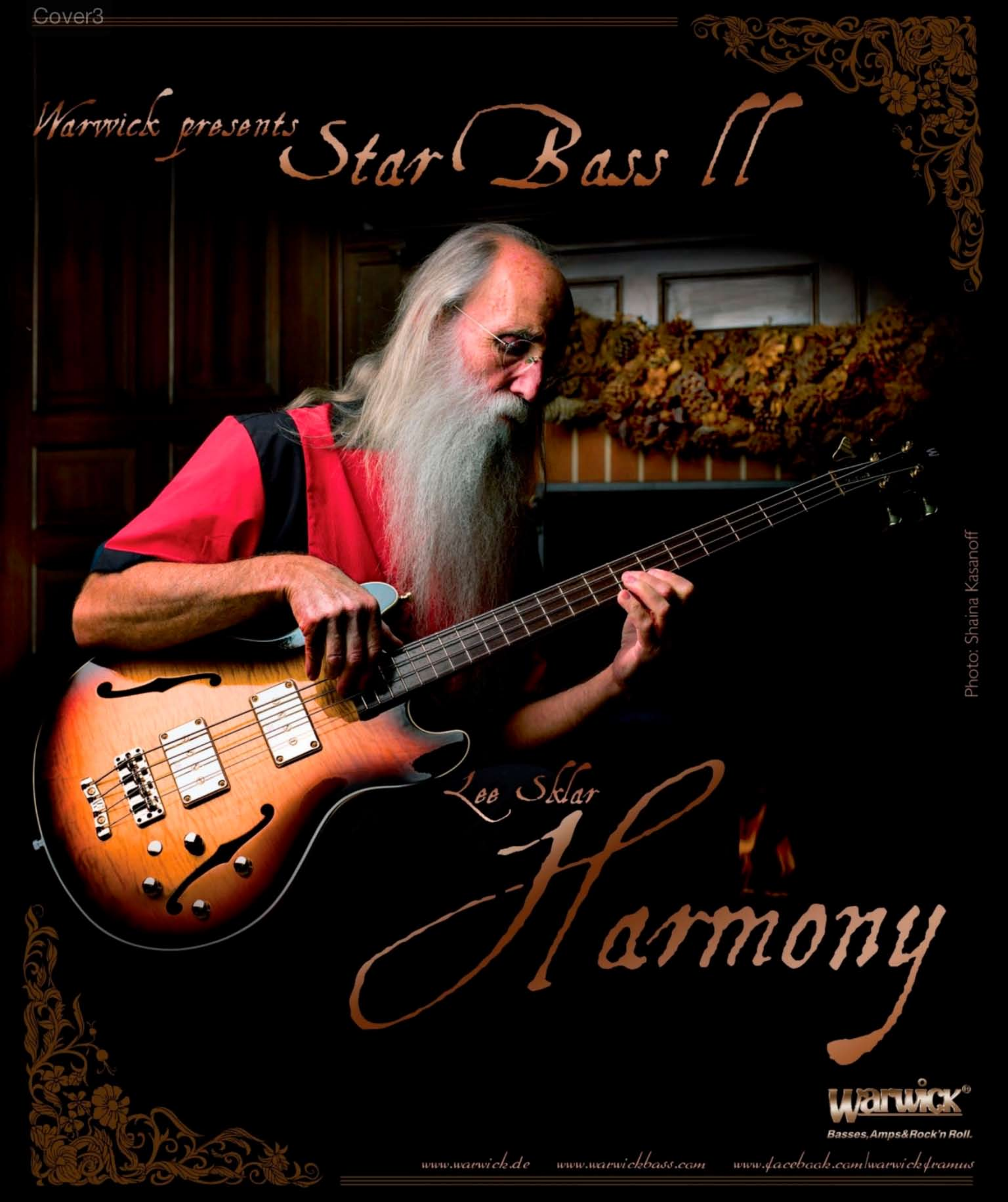
I should have known it was a phony setup. This wasn't really a nomad harem. The absence of live yaks should have been a dead giveaway. It was merely a tile shower room with the nozzles hidden behind these fabrics. I had been duped. Good thing I had left my goat at home. I had avoided yet another embarrassing *faux pas*.

I have heard tales of famously ostentatious contract riders: the Van Halen brown M&M rider; Iggy Pop demanding a Bob Hope impersonator; and the Foo Fighters' 2011 52-page tome—but this seemed to kick the bar up a little higher in my level of expectation. I guess if you are an iconic band of rock gods, you can afford to preserve the muse at any cost. If *this* was the venue dressing room, I shuddered to think of the tour buses.

Tom returned and fell right into place in the lap of this temporarily exotic habitat, and I guess as we snapped away at photos, the mood affected us all a bit. On the drive home after the show, my mind wistfully drifted to arid lands far away. To caravans, date palms, and Shangri-La.

So now, if you will excuse me, I have to go feed my goat.

—PAUL HAGGARD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